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THE THREE BEAUTIES.

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF THE "LOST HEIRESS," "DESERTED WIFE," "MISSING BRIDE," "INDIA," "WIFE'S VICTORY," "RETRIBUTION," "DISCARDED DAUGHTER," "CURSE OF CLIFTON," ETC., ETC.

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Imogene.— Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard—for several virtues
I have liked several women—but she!—oh, she!—
So perfect and so peerless—is created
Of every creature's best!—*Shakspeare.*

Winny.—Who does not understand and love her,
With feeling thus o'erfraught?
Though silent as the sky above her,
Like that, she kindles thought.—*Gilman.*

Harry.—Her waggish face, that speaks a soul jocose,
Seems t' have been cast i' the mould of fun and glee;
And on the bridge of her well-arched nose,
Sits laughter-plumed and white-winged jollity.—*Tennent.*

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THE THREE BEAUTIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALE OF SHANNONDALE.

Oh, sparkling clear thy waters flow,
And murmur, as they glide,
To the fair trees that bend below
To kiss the loving tide;
And far above the mountains stand,
Like watch-towers placed to guard a land
Where all conspires to yield delight,
Where pleasure reigns by day and night.

Shannondale.—L. M. SMITH.

THE valley of the Shenandoah presents a succession of the most various, sublime, and beautiful landscapes in the world. The Shenandoah, which yet retains its ancient, beautiful, and poetic Indian name, springs among the magnificent rocks of the Cyclopean towers. These towers, seven in number, rise to the height of several hundred feet, like the ruins of some stupendous ancient feudal castle, erected to guard the passes of this magnificent valley. Flowing on through a beautiful and fertile vale, hemmed in by mountains, and supposed to have been once the bed of an ancient lake, with its high and rocky banks, the Shenandoah passes Weir's Cave, one of the greatest natural wonders in the new world, and quite worthy to be ranked (says

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an English tourist) with the Natural Bridge or Niagara; and equal in dimensions, and in the variety, beauty and sublimity of its objects, to the celebrated Grotto of Antiparos. Still flowing on, the majestic river washes the western precipices of the Blue Ridge, forming in its serpentine course islands and promontories; some high, barren and blasted, others covered with beautiful verdure or crowned with lofty trees. Yet flowing on, the mighty river, gathering force from every tributary, rushes with frightfully increasing power and rapidity to meet the Potomac, and with a godlike strength to rend a passage through the mountains to the ocean.

The stupendous sublimity of this awful scene was said by Thomas Jefferson to be worth a voyage across the Atlantic —when a voyage across the ocean was an affair of six months.

But it is the Vale of Shannondale, the scene of my present romance of real life, that I wish to describe. A few miles below Harper's Ferry, the Blue Ridge makes a curve, hemming in a beautiful and fertile vale in the shape of a horseshoe, whose opening is on the south. Within the curve of the ridge, washing its base, and encircling the vale, rushes the Shenandoah. From the river the ground rises gradually toward the south. This lovely spot combines enchanting beauty with majestic sublimity. Hemmed in by lofty mountains, and encircled by a rushing river, shaded by groves of lofty trees, freshened by springs and fountains of sparkling water, fragrant with millions of wild flowers, and musical with the voices of thousands of birds, it realizes the vision of Rasselas' Happy Valley.

Many years since, it does not matter how many, stood on this favored spot an ancient mansion, one of the first erected in the valley of the Shenandoah.

The legend of its erection runs thus: In the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, during the last persecution of the

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Catholics by that princess, the head of a noble Catholic family in Wiltshire, England, emigrated to Virginia. The settlements were then all near the sea-coast, or upon the banks of James River and the Rappahannock. All the country west of the Blue Ridge was unknown. The valley of Virginia was traversed by hordes of warlike savages, who sometimes crossed the mountains and made fearful and destructive descents upon the uprotected settlements, and whose very yells were a horror. Soon after his arrival, Lord Summerfield formed an exploring and hunting party, who purposed crossing the mountains to explore the country and to hunt the deer.

This bearding the lions in their dens was an enterprise requiring great courage, prudence and fortitude. Lord Summerfield possessed all three in an eminent degree. He set out with his party fully equipped for several months exploring, fighting or hunting; and after many days of alternate traveling, sporting, skirmishing and rest, during which they had successfully evaded or repulsed the savages who would have interrupted their expedition, early in October they reached the sublime and beautiful Vale of Shannondale, encircled by its sparkling river, and shut in by its majestic mountains. Here, astonished at the stupendous grandeur, fascinated by the charming beauty of the landscape, delighted with the luxuriant fertility of the soil, and the exhilarating purity of the climate, Lord Summerfield, standing upon the lofty mountain on the north, and looking down upon this scene of wonderful beauty and grandeur, exclaimed:

"This is a spot to dare and do for! Here I plant my family again! Here I pitch my tent! Here will I live, here die, and here be buried!"

The party continued their hunting and exploring a few weeks longer, until the frosts and keen winds of winter warned them to return to the settlements, which they just reached by the Christmas festivities.

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Lord Summerfield was as good as his word. Immediately upon reaching home he commenced preparations for emigrating thither in the Spring. His fellow colonists endeavored to dissuade him from so hazardous a purpose, but in vain—he seemed possessed with the Vale of Shannondale—and neither the arguments or entreaties of his friends, present difficulty, toil, privation, or prospective danger and death, could turn him from his purpose. He contrived to rescue enough from the wreck of his English estates to purchase the land from the savages, whose favor he conciliated by two, with *them*, all-powerful means, namely—by placing perfect confidence in them, in coming to live so far from the settlements, *alone*, among them, and by making them many useful and showy presents. He sent over an agent to England, where under pain of death he dared not return in person, to collect together the scattered remnants of his property, to purchase and ship to him building materials, house furniture, hunting and farming implements, and in short every thing that was needed to create a civilized home in the grand and beautiful wilderness upon which he had set his heart. Another mission he entrusted to his agent, a letter of tender farewell to his young and beautiful cousin and betrothed bride living in Wiltshire, at Longford Castle, under the care of her aunt, the Marchioness of Northampton. His letter was full of strength, tenderness and hopeful love. He bade her wait in patience and in confidence until he had made this wild and lovely vale "bloom and blossom as the rose," until his house, his gardens, and *his* parks in the new world should equal in comfort and elegance *her* sumptuous residence in the old one. Finally, until the rapidly growing country should be sufficiently settled to make it a safe retreat for her. Then he said he would transplant his violet to the Vale of Shanondale. Could he indeed expect the beautiful, refined and cherished daughter of aristocratic wealth and luxury to join

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him in his wild hunting cabin. It never once entered his mind.

Viola, of Summerfield, the most fair and fragile-looking human flower that ever bloomed its day in the parterres of a palace conservatory!—Expose *her* to a wilderness life! No! it was not to be thought of. So said Lady Northampton when she had started Lord Summerfield to America; and yet she was only thinking *at that time* of the settlement! How much more dreadful, then, the idea, had it ever presented itself to her, of exposing Viola to the almost certainly fatal toils, privations and perils of the fearful mountain passes, infested with savage beasts and more savage men.

Viola, of Summerfield, was in her luxurious bower at Longford Castle, when the letter from her lover was placed in her hand. She caught it with a bound of joy—it was the first time she had heard from him since his departure. She tore it open, and read it with a palpitating heart. Then her eyes filled and overflowed with tears. She folded it quietly up, and formed a resolution.

In the meantime, Lord Summerfield, upon the Rappahannock, was impatiently waiting the return of the ship that was to bring out his cargo. The spring opened, and he had not heard from the vessel. At last, wishing to get a small garden under cultivation that very season, he set out on horseback, attended by two hired men, also mounted, for his valley estate, having left orders that his agent should land the cargo, and transport it in wagons to the spot selected for building. It was as early as the first of March when he set out—it was near the last of the same month that he found himself again in the Vale of Shannondale. Already the snows had melted off the mountains, and the young grass was springing in the valley, and the trees putting forth young buds in the forest. He went to work with his two men, and felled trees and built a cabin of logs

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as a temporary shelter. Then he began to hedge in a small garden, which the two men prepared for the seed. Every day, as the spring advanced, revealed new beauties in the charming landscape, and increased the impatience of Lord Summerfield to add all the improvements of civilization and art to the loveliness and grandeur of nature. The air was populous with wild fowl, the forests filled with game, and the beautiful river alive with the finest fish. Coal, iron ore, and red sandstone, a beautiful material for building, abounded in the mountains, and springs of mineral water, the admirable medicinal qualities of which he was chemist enough to appreciate, were freely dispersed about the vale. Indeed, it seemed that Nature, in a fit of extravagant liberality, had here lavished all her rarest and most costly treasures. "It was a land to die for!" And Lord Summerfield worked like a day-laborer on hire, to get it under cultivation, while he anxiously expected his teams.

At length, one evening in May, when all the vale was bathed in a flood of golden sunlight, when the two men, Hiram and Peter, had prepared the evening repast under one of the vast oak trees that dotted the vale, and Lord Summerfield was walking up and down the green slopes of the hill, now losing himself in contemplating the beautiful river, with its fringe of trees, or gazing with awe upon the majestic mountains across its flood, or, turning back, rested his eyes upon the dim old forest, dark and green, near, but floating off as it ascended behind, until the faint blue hues of the distant foliage blended with the azure of the far and cloud-capped mountains; and listening to the rustling of wings among the leaves, as the birds fluttered to rest, or to the singing and chirping of all those tiny insects, the minstrels of the night, gay nocturnal serenaders, who always begin when the bird ceases, and not till then; or to the rushing sound of the waters, as they swept around the vale. How deep the solitude seemed!—

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how profound!—and how loud roared the current in the absence of other noises! But hark! There comes a sound that is neither the rushing of waters, nor the flutter of birds, nor the chirping of insects, nor the waving of trees. Nearer and nearer it approaches. Lord Summerfield has stopped, and every sense is on the *qui vive*, as he looks and listens down the vale. For he thinks of a hostile tribe of Indians. It comes nearer and nearer—it *is*—it *is* the clatter of many horses' feet!

"The savages! the savages! Fly, my lord!—fly!" exclaimed the two men, setting the example by taking to their heels.

But Lord Summerfield kept his eagle eye fixed in the direction of the swiftly-coming horsemen. They emerge from the trees skirting the river—they canter rapidly up the hill—they are in sight—oh, joy!—they are men of England! they approach—oh, rapture!—they are old friends and neighbors! Lord Summerfield hastened down the hill to meet them—and—could this indeed be?—was this possible?—a fragile and fay-like figure rode among them—her steed rushed upon him—in an instant, with a cry of joy, she threw herself upon his bosom—and Summerfield folded his own Viola, palpitating with joy and exhaustion, to his heart. Forgetful of the friends and neighbors, whose sudden appearance had filled his whole soul with joy an instant before—forgetful of every thing on earth or in heaven but her—he pressed her again and again to his bosom, half smothering her with passionate kisses, while she clung to him and sobbed for joy. She gave no explanation yet, and yet he asked no question. At last she raised herself from his breast, and blushing with sudden self-recollection, she whispered,

"Welcome your friends!"

Then the travelers dismounted and gathered around them, some with pleased and benevolent smiles, and some

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with grave and earnest faces—for it seemed piteous to see that fair, fragile girl alone among a band of hardy men, and to know that all their care could not save her from the inevitable hardships she had voluntarily exposed herself to. Lord Summerfield shook hands with all, embraced many, and raised the hand of one among them in lowly reverence to his lips. This one was Father White, a catholic priest, the confessor of Viola.

"No stories till after supper, friends," said Lord Summerfield, as, with Viola on his arm, he led the way up the hill.

The travelers followed, each leading his horse. At the top of the hill, Lord Summerfield found the fugitive men returned, and engaged in plucking more fowls to dress for this accession of company.

"Where shall we put the lady to sleep, sir?" asked Peter, "seeing that there is but one room in the cabin, and that is your lordship's own."

Lord Summerfield started at this question, and fell into deep thought. Supper was served, and the travelers made a hearty repast of birds, fish, and wild fruits. After supper, Father White, taking Viola in his hand, joined Lord Summerfield, and said:

"Now, my lord, if you are disposed, I am ready to give you a history of this unexpected emigration."

Lord Summerfield bowed, and Father White was about to give his story, but the eyes of Viola were so eloquent, her lips half apart, and so eager, that he smiled and said:

"Well, go on, then, my daughter. Tell your story your own way," and withdrew.

The fragile girl, sinking down upon the bank, drew Lord Summerfield to a seat by her side, and said:

"Did you think, Harold, that *I* could be happy in the luxury and self-indulgence of my English home, while I knew you were alone in the wilds of the New World?

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Oh! don't you know, Harold, that I would have accompanied you when you came out, if it had not been for my aunt,—and even yourself. *You*, even *you*, objected to taking me!"

"My own darling, could I take advantage of your affection and your generosity, and expose you, delicate as you are, to all the evils of a savage life?"

"Ah! but Harold, you should have known—you *did* know, by your *own* heart, that some mental pains, toils, and privations, are far harder to bear than physical ones—and among them are partings, separation, prolonged absence from those we love, doubt, fear, suspense, anxiety for them. Harold, I could not bear this mental torture! Well, just before the receipt of your last letter, my Aunt Northampton sickened. She went to London in order to get speech of the Queen before she should breathe her last. She reached the Villa on the Thames, she succeeded in getting a private interview with the Queen, who came, at her request, to visit her. Something frightful passed at that interview, I believe; at least my poor aunt died in great anguish soon after, and it is said that the Queen has never held up her head since. Well, Harold, I found myself mistress of my own fortune and person. As soon as I got over the shock and grief of my dear aunt's death, I began to think of communicating the news to you. I had written a letter, and was waiting for a ship to carry it, when *your* letter arrived. I read it, Harold, and I determined to put all my property in cash, and to join you in the wilderness; dear Harold, were we not betrothed, and had I not a *right* to do so if I pleased! I told some of my aunt's friends. They broke out against me as unwomanly, indelicate; and, though I *felt* that it was *not* as they said, yet I *feared* that you would think with them; but you *do not*, do you, Harold? Do you think lightly of me for following you out here?"

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"My blessed saint! it were a blasphemy to think an evil thought of you!" exclaimed Lord Summerfield fervently.

"Oh, please do not say such extravagant things of me, dear Harold! It mortifies me even more than reproof would—because, alas!—I am so far from deserving commendation, still less praise."

"You are beyond and above praise, my darling Viola—go on with your narrative, dearest one."

"Well, Father White then had been ordered to quit England, under pain of death, within ten days; I concealed him at Longford Castle; he was there when your letter came; I told him of my project to join you in America; I asked his counsel, and oh, Harold, I hung breathless upon the words of his reply, for I have unbounded confidence in his wisdom and goodness; and if he had given his voice against my voyage—perhaps, *perhaps*, Harold I should not have come—perhaps nothing but your *own* summons would then have brought me. But our reverend and most beloved friend approved my decision—nay, he applauded it, and blessed me from the fullness of his joy, and told me that he would himself accompany me to America. Well, Harold, Father White and myself had many consultations. He knew several of your friends, who, persecuted in England, wished to settle somewhere else. He held many secre conferences with them, the result of which was, that we formed a party from our own neighborhood to come over, and here we all are. We would have announced our intention, had any ship been leaving England for America; bnt our own, in which we came, was really the first that left of the season. So here we are, dear Harold—your tenants, your friends, and your wife—but oh! Harold, you do not blame me in your heart for this?"

"My darling, darling girl, do you want me to be an idolater? Do you want me to fall at your feet and adore you?" said Summerfield, embracing her fondly.

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The purple shades of evening were approaching—the stars were coming out one by one—the dew was falling—the travelers descended the hill to the spot where their wagons had been left, and some took out the tents, carried them up the hill and pitched them, and some turned the wagons down for sleeping places. During all this time, Lord Summerfield and Viola sat under the oak tree discoursing. The priest again stood before them.

"My children, there must be a marriage here to-night! Do you not know it? have you not thought of it? I have been waiting to receive some communication upon the subject, and now I have to break the matter myself; for well as you love each other, I do not believe you have thought of marriage this evening."

That was true. They had thought of *nothing*. They were lost in the delight of merely meeting and talking with each other again. That was true until now; but now the priest's words sent an electric shock of ecstacy through every nerve of Summerfield, and threw the delicate Viola into a tremor of vague apprehension. Without a word, however, Summerfield arose, and raising Viola, and drawing her arm through his own, he requested Father White to summon his friends, and follow him into the cabin.

Then and there they were married.

They lived in the log cabin about the centre of the vale. The other settlers selected farms on the other side of the river, over the mountains, or back into the depth of the forest, which they began to cut down. The beautiful Vale of Shannondale was left to the Summerfields. The settlers did every thing in their power to soften the hard lot the fragile Viola had taken upon herself when she became the wife of a pioneer.

As years passed, the bracing air and the fine water of the mountains, so invigorated Viola, that from being an extremely delicate girl she was growing to be a fine robust

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woman. In the course of two years, a handsome and substantial house of red sandstone was erected in the vale. This house was furnished with far more taste and elegance than usually appertained to the dwellings of the early settlers. But one child, a handsome, hearty boy, named after his father, Harold, blessed this happy marriage, and from him were descended all the Summerfields, proprietors of the vale, until 17—, when it came into the hands of the last of that house. And this is the tradition of the early settlement of the Vale of Shannondale.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD RED-STONE HOUSE.

> That dear old home!
> Something of old ancestral pride it keeps,
> Though fallen from its early power and vastness,
> The sunlight seems to their eyes brighter there
> Than wheresoever else.—*Mrs. Kemble.*

I LOVE to make you familiar with the localities of our stories; the grounds about which our people walked; the house in which they dwelt; the rooms in which they lived and loved, or sinned and suffered. I will strive to place Red-Stone Hall, the seat of the Summerfields at Shannondale, vividly before you. Pray assist me with your own attention and imagination.

The house was situated about half-way up the gradually rising hill. Behind the house was the dark and grim old forest. Before the house, the ground, green with verdure, and dotted with groves of old forest trees, descended to the river that, rushing around with a sweeping curve, forms the

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shape of a horseshoe; across the river tower the lofty mountains that shut in the vale.

The house itself was built after the manner of most old Virginian mansions, with more massive strength than elegance; more breadth than height, and with more respect to convenience than to appearances; and hence the result was, greater durability, comfort, and picturesque effect, than order and regularity. It had been constructed of the rich and brilliant red sandstone found in the mountains. Its form was square and narrow, with a high-peaked roof —its color, dark red. Its foundations had been laid broad, deep, and strong, and upon them were raised two stories, crowned by an attic, with dormer windows.

It was surrounded by a low wall, built also of red sandstone; in the centre of which, immediately in front of the house, was an iron gate, that opened upon a brick-paved road, shaded on each side by elm trees, and which led straight up to the front main entrance of the house, a substantial portico.

This portico admitted into the wide passage that ran through the middle of the house, dividing it into equal parts. In the centre of the back of this passage was the staircase, with its broad and polished oak steps, and its balustrades of mahogany, turning off in a scroll to the right and left of the bottom step.

On the right of this passage was situated first the front drawing-room, whose windows looked out upon the river and the mountains, including the vale; and behind that, the large saloon, only used for balls, &c., and whose back windows looked out upon the grim old pine forest behind the house. These rooms had been recently fitted up in handsome modern style.

On the left of the passage was first the front parlor, whose windows commanded the same view with those of the front drawing-room; next, the dining-room; and behind

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that, the comfortable family sitting-room: it is to this apartment that I shall soon introduce you. The furniture of these rooms was old as the house itself. Behind the house, and connected with it by shaded piazzas, were wings; that on the right containing the still-room, used for distilling herbs, essences, &c., and for preparing cordials, bounces, domestic wines, &c.,—it was filled with closets, in which these domestic treasures were stowed away,—the carding and spinning-room, the weaving-room, &c. That on the left contained the pantry, the kitchen, the scullery, and the laundry.

Scattered about in the forest, behind the house, were the cabins of the negroes who worked the farm.

At the time our story opens, the only representatives of the Summerfield family were Mrs. Margary Summerfield, the widow of Harold Hardinge, the last of the Summerfields, and Imogene, her only child—the heiress of that large estate. At this time Imogene Summerfield was finishing her education at the convent school of Georgetown. The August holidays were at hand, when she was expected to leave school permanently, and great preparations were being made at Red-Stone Hall for her reception. It was in honor of this event that the drawing-room and saloon had been splendidly refurnished. A ball and supper was to celebrate the coming-out of the young and beautiful heiress of the once noble house of Summerfield.

Mrs. Summerfield had invited a party of young people to Red-Stone Hall, to welcome her daughter upon her return home—among them were her niece, Winifred Darling, the only daughter of her only brother, Squire Darling, of Oak Grove, with her companion or humble friend, Sinai Hinton, and Harriette Joy, the niece of the old priest, Father Burleigh, who for fifty years had ministered at the altar of the Catholic Chapel of the Sacred Heart.

This party of young people deserve further notice than

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I have given them. First, Miss Darling, or Winny Darling, as she was fondly called by her young friends, was the loveliest and most loving little creature that ever blessed a doting father's heart.

She was his only child—a love child, the child of his adored wife, who had given this angel life at the price of her own.

Far back of the old hall at Oak Grove, there was a marble monument—it was the tomb of Angela Darling.

Squire Darling had wished to name his little daughter after his lost angel, but his mother, Winifred Darling, with a good Catholic's care and caution, had the baby christened soon after her birth and before the bereaved husband had recovered from the stupor into which his sudden and terrible loss had stunned him; and, without stopping to consult him, she had, as a matter of course, named the baby after herself, for it is a custom in Maryland and Virginia to name children after grand-parents—thus we have John, the son of Joseph, who was the son of John who was the son of Joseph, and so on.

Mrs. Winifred Darling was an aged widow, had but two children—Squire Darling, of Oak Grove, her eldest, and Mrs. Summerfield, of Red-Stone Hall, her youngest; and but two grandchildren, Winny Darling and Imogene Summerfield. She divided her time between the two families—living during the Summer season at Red-Stone Hall, and during the Winter at Oak Grove. They were a thoroughly united family.

Winny Darling had never been sent to school; her grandmother and her father never would consent to part with her. In those days in Virginia and Maryland *tutors* were employed for the private instruction of young ladies who were educated at home. The custom of engaging governesses had not then reached this section of the country. A tutor had been employed to conduct the education of Miss Darling.

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The Virginians have exceedingly rigid notions of propriety. It is not deemed proper for a young lady to take a solitary walk or ride even through her father's woods or over his hills—and so, when engaging the tutor, Madam Winifred insisted that it should be stipulated in the bond that he should attend Miss Darling in all her walks and rides.

This was a precaution indeed not unnecessary, for the forest thickets and the mountain caverns were infested with a banditti then peculiar to this region—fugitive slaves—desperate men, who would watch and wait, descend upon the unguarded house, or the solitary traveler, and commit any act of horrible atrocity to which necessity or inclination might drive them. In guarding against one species of danger, however, Madam Winifred exposed her grandchild to another. Think of it! a youth of humble parentage, who became a tutor in order to make money to complete his collegiate education, eighteen years old, handsome, intellectual, ardent, earnest, with his heart as yet unawakened from its child-sleep—made the constant companion, the most constant companion of a girl of fifteen, an angel—the very embodiment of love—in the morning ride, in the forenoon studies, in the afternoon recreation, in the evening walk.

"'Tis an old tale and often told:" *they loved*—it was inevitable!—but they loved so purely, so highly, so spiritually, as yet, that not one word of love had passed the lips of either, and it might yet have been long, very long, before their delicate affection would have betrayed itself, or alarmed the prudence of her haughty family, had not the serpent entered their paradise in the shape of—

Sinai Hinton.

It is amazing how much evil is wrought by people "of the best intentions." Madam Winifred had conceived it proper that instead of being sent to school, Miss Darling

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should have a tutor at home. Next, that instead of being suffered to roam at large like other young things, Miss Darling should have the tutor always at her side, with his graceful form, his glorious eyes, his deep-toned voice, and his eloquent words; and last and worst, as Winny approached her sixteenth year, Madam Darling fulminated a bull that Miss Darling must have a female companion, and Sinai Hinton, a distant relative of the family, was engaged to come and stay at Oak Grove. If there be any truth in the old heathen idea of the transmigration of souls—Sinai or Sina Hinton's soul had ascended the scale of creation, first through the subtile narcotic poisons, then through the snake, the jay bird, the cat, and had at last reached its most powerful development in—*Sina Hinton.* This fascinating, guileful, and intriguing girl was not strictly speaking handsome—she was below the middle size, her figure rather bony, her complexion dark, and her features strongly marked. Her hair and brows were black, and her eyes large, dark, and powerful in their force of attraction. Her movements were exceedingly graceful. Is there any thing more graceful than the motion of a cat—so smooth, swift, and stealthy? or that of a serpent, with its rapid, beautiful and dazzling undulation? Her movements were exceedingly graceful, but a close student of nature might have observed in them the subtlety of the snake and the trickery of a cat.

On leaving her city home, her mother had said to her:

"You go out alone into the world, Sina! you have nothing but your cleverness to carve your fortune with; but you can do it!"

"If I were beautiful I could," said Sina.

"You have fine eyes, and a woman with a fine pair of eyes can produce the effect of beauty, or she can manufacture any other beauty."

"But what can a girl do with such a catastrophe of a nose as I have?" laughed Sina.

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"When you converse with people make them look at *your* eyes, and they will forget your nose—it is your *eyes*, your *eyes*, and your soft, slow tones, and your grace that must make your fortune!"

Sina laughed—she laughed to think how much more deeply skilled she was in such art through her mere natural instincts than the mother who advised her. Such was the companion selected for the beautiful, affectionate, and confiding Winny. And accordingly, some short time previous to the commencement of our story, she had arrived at Oak Grove.

Oak Grove was a find old baronial-looking residence. The hall stood in the midst of a grove of gigantic forest oaks, which gave their name to the homestead. There was no undergrowth, and the grass was green and smooth as velvet—so that even in the Autumn the deep shade of the magnificent trees was healthful as pleasant. Fine orchards, fine gardens, and well-cultivated fields, surrounded Oak Grove. The estate was the best stocked with cattle in the whole country—while a stable of thorough-bred and well-trained horses, and a kennel of the finest hounds, formed the delight of the squire.

The cabins of the negroes who worked the plantation were apart by themselves, in a green glen. The little houses were built ten on each side of the road, thus forming a street. They were all uniform, painted white, and with one door between two windows in front, painted red. Each had its little garden behind, and its apple, pear, or peach tree shading in front. At the head of this street, crossing it at right angles and facing down it, was the overseer's house. This was also white with red doors and window-shutters—but it was larger and more commodious than the others, and it had a piazza and a flower yard in front, and a larger garden behind. The overseer was an old colored man, an attached servant of the family, whose

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father and grandfather had belonged to the Darlings. Like most other Virginia negroes he had assumed his master's family name, and called himself Squire Darling. His baptismal name was Achilles, but the family called him Uncle Kill. From sunrise to sunset, except two hours for breakfast and two hours for dinner, Uncle Kill's duties of overseer kept him in the field, where he was a perfect bug-a-boo to a lazy hand. The rest of the time Uncle Kill preached the Gospel, played the fiddle, told fortunes, tracked the coon, or made himself otherwise useful or agreeable. Uncle Kill had a wife near his own age, called Minerva, but whose celestial name the bad taste of the household had bedevilled, as it had that of her lord Achilles. They called her "Nerve." And this was no misnomer; she was a woman of great nervous energy. (It is a pity, by the way, that this word "nervous," in the same relations, expresses such opposite meanings—for the laborer's "nervous limbs," means his great strong powerful legs and arms; while Miss Fanny Faintaway's "nervous limbs" means her weak, trembling, ailing, fainting members.) Nerve was a woman of strong body, strong affections, strong opinions, and strong methods of expressing them—strong will, and a strong way of expressing it. Nerve's office on the plantation was a general supervision of the spinning, weaving, knitting and other women's work; and she was as efficient in her way as Uncle Kill was in his.

When Sina Hinton arrived at Oak Grove, the fine old hall, the grand old forest-trees, the wealth of the estate with its negroes, its fields, gardens, orchards, and stock of every description, excited her admiration and provoked her envy—admiration of the estate, envy of its heiress. Such a set of feelings could not arise in a strong, subtle, and unprincipled nature like hers, without sooner or later becoming the master motives of her actions. She watched

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the favorable points of her position, and resolved to take the greatest advantage of every one. For, "Why should this silly, simpering, cooing little fool have all this great plantation, and *I*, her cousin, have none?" she said. The respect with which she was treated by Madame Winifred and the squire—the affectionate confidence reposed in her by Winny, the esteem she had won from the tutor, all were available for her purpose, and most of all was the deep unspoken love that her keen subtlety perceived to exist between Edgar Ardenne, the tutor, and Winny Darling. "If this foolish attachment should provoke her father to disinherit her—at least the chance is not bad. The very fervor of her father's love for Winny, if that love were abandoned for a passion for another, and outraged by disobedience in marrying that other against his consent—yes! the very *love* of her father turned to wrath, would drive him to disown the ingrate daughter. But the fools of lovers are so slow, they would content themselves with their present life ten years yet, and never take another step unless something happened to rouse up opposition! *That* I *know* would soon kindle their deep, calm love—deep and calm as the depths of the sea before a storm—into a passion! into a tempest! I must put my shoulder to this wheel!"

When a good heart and a strong mind determine upon a good act—the angels assist that soul with an opportunity. When a bad man or woman, with the necessary strength of *will*, resolve upon any evil end, the devil is faithful to supply the means.

Sina Hinton had arrived in July. It was the latter part of the month that Miss Darling and herself were invited to make a visit to Red-Stone Hall, to be there to welcome Miss Summerfield, the cousin of the latter, to her home.

The distance from Oak Grove to Red-Stone Hall was fifteen miles; but with their fleet horses the Oak Grove family frequently rode it early in the morning, dined, sup-

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ped, and returned in the evening; sometimes by moonlight or starlight; and nothing could be more delightful than those fine night rides through the fresh, green, dark forest, after the heat of an oppressive Summer day.

Winny and Edgar Ardenne always fell into silence—into delicious reverie, while riding side by side through the dim uncertain forest path—they needed not the medium of words to commune there. It was a delightful ride—the freshness of the evening breeze—the brightness of the wonderful stars—the vague, romantic dimness of the forest aisles—all conspired to refresh the nerves and inspire the minds.

Sina Hinton, the astute girl, had noticed the effect of these forest night rides—and she always took care to drop behind or ride on before, making the excuse that the path was not wide enough for three equestrians—and thus she would give the lovers every opportunity of improving the romance, and yielding to the temptation of the hour. It was in vain though as yet; their affection was too childlike, too simple, confiding and happy, to inspire the wish for a change. And it was this that made Sina Hinton exclaim in her vexation against the apathy of the lovers.

It was this that made her resolve to bring about a denouement.

It turned out to be a very sultry day, that upon which Miss Darling had intended to set out for Red-Stone Hall. Miss Hinton proposed that they should defer it until evening, and take the ride through the forest by starlight. This was agreed upon—and accordingly, after tea Winny kissed her grandmother, who promised soon to join her at Shannondale, and kissed her father, who pledged his word to follow the next day, and went down to the Quarters and took an affectionate leave of her "old women," as she called all the superannuated negresses whose comfort was her peculiar care—and accompanied by Sina Hinton and attended by

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Edgar Ardenne, set out for her ride. Sina Hinton dropped behind as usual; and again as usual the childlike lovers dropped into a reverie, broken only by low-toned observations by one of them and a soft assent by the other! They reached the Vale of Shannondale and Red-Stone Hall by ten o'clock—and there they found assembled Father Burleigh, the aged priest, his niece, Harriette or Harry Joy, and lastly, Colonel Henry Lee Dangerfield, a relation of the Summerfield family, and the owner of the largest estate in the neighborhood. He was an officer of the army, who had distinguished himself in the recent war of the Revolution—and had now returned to private life covered with military glory. Miss Summerfield had been betrothed to him ever since she was an infant and he a lad. She had grown in beauty by his side, and he had loved her in a gentle, domestic way, and was accustomed to think of her as his future wife. She had left home at fifteen years of age, and he had not seen her for three years. He had as a matter of course been invited to Red-Stone Hall to welcome her. Mrs. Summerfield, leaving a request that Miss Hinton would do the honors of the house during her absence, had departed for the Georgetown Convent, to bring home her daughter the day before. She was expected home that evening. Hence the presence of the company. Mrs. Summerfield had gone in her own carriage, attended by her own servants. Therefore the precise hour of her return was uncertain—but ten o'clock struck, and she had not come; eleven struck, and still no sound of carriage wheels disturbed the silence; at twelve o'clock the company gave her up for the night, and retired to bed. The next night was the time appointed for the grand ball that was to celebrate Miss Summerfield's coming-out.

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CHAPTER III.

IMOGENE SUMMERFIELD.

She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allowed,
And deemed that fallen worship far more dear
Because 'twas fallen;—her sires were proud
Of deeds and days when they had filled the ear
Of nations, and had never bent or bowed
To novel power; and as she was the last,
She held their old faith and old feelings fast.—*Byron.*

EARLY the next morning the guests assembled at Shannondale, met in the piazza—that right-hand front piazza that commanded the slope of the grove-shaded hill as it rolled to the river, of the rushing circular sweep of the river, and of the surrounding towering mountains. Right across the river, opposite to them, was the Lover's Leap—a bold perpendicular rock, with a wild Indian legend connected with it.

"Who knows the story?" inquired Sina Hinton.

"Every one knows it, but no one tells it but Father Burleigh, and he never tells it in any other place but the summit of the rock," replied Col. Lee Dangerfield.

Sina Hinton sauntered, swayed and undulated up to the side of Father Burleigh, and said in her mellifluous, coaxing tones—

"Oh! Father Burleigh, will you not form a party over to Lover's Leap to-day and tell the story? I do so love those wild legends—and I should so delight to get a view of this vale from that prominence."

Father Burleigh was about to decline, upon the score of

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his infirmities and the fatigue of ascending the hill, but Sina's large, dark, pleading eyes were fixed on his own, and there was no resisting them. He said that he would do so "with pleasure," if it were agreeable to the rest of the company.

"Of course it will be agreeable to the rest of the party," exclaimed Harriette Joy. "Let us go, uncle; Mrs. and Miss Summerfield will not be here till night now, and I want a good opportunity for a sentimental flirtation with—I know who!"

"Will you never be steady, Harry—never deport yourself like a lady!" whispered the priest.

"Never, while you abbreviate my pretty name of Harriette to Harry! It makes me feel like a boy!" laughed Harriette, as she placed a straw hat jauntily upon her head; and in fact with her roguish black eyes, laughing lips, and clustering curls, her mirthful countenance, half in dark shadow from the rim of the hat, half in light from the kissing of the sunshine, Harry Joy looked like a saucy—a very saucy—boy, and nothing else.

"I could fall desperately in love with that little imp!" mused Colonel Lee Dangerfield, as he leaned against a pillar of the piazza and contemplated Harry; "she has just eccentricity enough to bewilder all one's senses; but this will not do. I must take my eyes off."

But taking his eyes off and keeping his eyes off the handsome swaggering hoiden was not so easy; he disapproved of Harry from his soul—he was sorely dissatisfied with himself at the anomaly of the very peculiarities he so thoroughly contemned attracting him most forcibly. Harry was the priest's niece—that was her passport into good society—otherwise she was poor, uneducated, rather rude, but withal possessing a hearty, joyous, genial nature, that made her the soul of any frolic that was afoot.

"You must excuse her, gentlemen! You must excuse

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her," said the priest, "she has never had the benefit of female culture, and a single man, even a priest, is unfit to bring up a girl."

"Well then, uncle, that proves the evil of your clerical celibacy. You ought to have got married like an honest member of society, and then I should have been your daughter and not your niece!" speaking to the priest, but letting fly a couple of arrows from her dark eyes at Colonel Lee Dangerfield.

The priest started, grew pale, looked searchingly, steadily, severely into the face of his niece, but Harry's eyes were dancing with those of Colonel Lee Dangerfield, and she seemed to have forgotten her light words. A bitter, bitter groan, suppressed at the lips, murmured deep down the bosom of the old priest, and he fell into a deep gloom. He checked Harry's rudeness no more that morning.

"Miss Summerfield, of Red-Stone Hall, will have to watch her betrothed," said Sina Hinton to herself, (Sina Hinton always spoke truth when she spoke to herself, and seldom at any other time); and "Harriette Joy is as much the niece of the priest as I am the nephew of my mother. I have your secret, Father Burleigh, and that is another favorable point in my destiny; so much for keeping my eyes open."

Overflowing with exuberant life, Harry Joy had whirligigged out of the piazza, and Colonel Lee Dangerfield was about to follow, when the sound of carriage-wheels were heard below, and soon the traveling chariot of Mrs. Summerfield rolled slowly up the hill, approached and paused before the portico. The gentlemen present sprung down the steps to meet and assist the ladies from the carriage. Mrs. Summerfield came first—a tall, dark complexioned, and dignified woman, in the prime of life, and in the rich maturity of matronly beauty. She alighted and stepped forward with a queen-like air of blended majesty and graciousness.

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"What a magnificent woman is Mrs. Summerfield! A step like a reindeer's, a neck like a swan's, an eye like an eagle's, a mien like a monarch's! Heavens! if I had a form and face like that, I could do what I pleased with it. But Imogene—Miss Summerfield, the heiress—let's see what she is like!" commented Sina Hinton, as she watched the carriage door.

Miss Summerfield alighted and passed quickly through the hall and entered the house, her figure muffled in a large black silk shawl, her face hidden by a black lace vail.

"She is either ugly or very beautiful. She is either ashamed of her face or she saves it for a dazzling effect in full dress—now which is it? They say she was beautiful when she left home for school; but girls change so much as they grow up—the ugly frequently growing handsome, the beautiful as often becoming plain. Woe for her if she has not beauty enough to countercharm the spell woven around the heart of her betrothed! This is a nice set of cross purposes as ever I saw. Colonel Lee Dangerfield betrothed to Miss Summerfield and in love with Harry, whom he would never marry—Harry passionately in love with him—Winny Darling loving, unconsciously, pensive Edgar Ardenne—Ardenne enamored of her! Satan has some use for me here, I trow; and it is a pity if I do not make something of this medley."

All the guests were waiting impatiently for the breakfast-bell to ring, when they should meet at table the heiress of Red-Stone Hall, in whose honor they were assembled. The music their ears so thirsted for at last sounded on the air; and each gentleman selecting a lady, the company marched into the breakfast-room. At the head of the table appeared Mrs. Summerfield, who had changed her dress, but nowhere visible was the heiress. Mrs. Summerfield gracefully invited her guests to be seated, and apologized for the nonappearance of Miss Summerfield that morning, by say-

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ing that her daughter was greatly fatigued. She also explained the cause of their not arriving the evening before, by remarking that Miss Summerfield had been too much exhausted by the first two stages of their journey to be able to pursue it further than Harper's Ferry, where they had rested the preceding evening; and, bowing gracefully, she sat down.

"We hope, madam, that Miss Summerfield will be sufficiently restored to join us at dinner," remarked Colonel Lee Dangerfield.

"Miss Summerfield cannot have the pleasure of meeting her friends until the evening," replied the lady. And then the morning meal commenced.

It was a breakfast set out with magnificence—gold and silver plate and Sevres china flashing in the light, and all the superabundant luxuries of the spot and season abounding. The finest milk, cream, butter and eggs, for the dairy and poultry-yards of Shannondale were unrivaled—fresh fish from the Shenandoah, game from the forest, and wild fowl from the air, &c., &c., &c.

After breakfast the party formed for Lover's Leap. The horses were brought to the door. The party mounted and cantered off down the hill to the river; a ferry-boat took them across, and they began to ascend the opposite mountain by a circuitous back path.

Sina Hinton, contrary to her usual custom, kept near Miss Darling. "What a venerable looking man is Father Burleigh, my love," she said to Winny; "with his silver hair and reverend countenance, he reminds me of what St. Paul might have been in his old age."

"Yes, dear Father Burleigh! but I am so sorry that he is so infirm. What a pity it is that people we love should grow old and become infirm."

"Ah, but he approaches a better and happier world," replied Miss Hinton, in the usual stereotyped words.

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"Yes, but we don't want any better or happier world than this. If the Lord would please to let us, I should like to live a hundred millions of centuries on this very earth, with all my dear friends around me, and would never, never, *never* want to see Heaven!"

"Oh, that is very wicked, my dear! But to return to Father Burleigh; he has been here a long time."

"Fifty years last January, they say; he was here as sacristan first of all; then here he was ordained; and he has lived here ever since."

"Hum-m-m," cooed Sina in a reverie; "well—ah—how long has his lovely niece been with him?"

"Harry?"

"Of course; he has no other, has he?"

"Oh, no! but then you called her 'lovely,' which was so funny; well, she has been with him ever since she was two years old—before I can remember."

"Yes! who is she? Where did she come from?"

"Well, she is the daughter of his deceased *sister* or somebody, and he brought her from away down in Maryland somewhere."

"Has Father Burleigh always remained here, and never been abroad?"

"Yes, once he was away two years, down on the Chesapeake, near the old station of Mount Carmel, in Maryland. It was a year after his return to this neighborhood that he received a notice of his sister's death, and he went and fetched home her child, Harriette, and he put her in charge of his housekeeper; she has been with him many years, and now keeps house for him."

"Um-m-hum-m," again murmured Sina; then she suddenly inquired, "How old is Father Burleigh? *quite* aged, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes! *very, very* old—almost seventy."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Miss Hinton, with surprise.

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"Yes; is not *that* old?"

Sina smiled.

"Why, my dear, I supposed him to be eighty—he looks that. I could not make some things out either at that rate; but, my little love, how old is his niece?"

"Harry Joy is twenty-five, but few take her to be so old; many people think her about twenty."

"U-m-m-me," replied Sina.

I wish I could give the reader an idea of the low, slow, cooing murmur with which that "U-m-m-me" was floated out. It was one of Sina's fascinations; it expressed, besides an affirmative, love, sympathy, comfort, consolation—only Sina was so fond of it that she use it *in* place, and, as now, *out* of place—always instead of yes; like her undulating motion, it was characteristic of her.

"You may ride on now, love, and join Ardenne, who is waiting for us at the summit. I must stop here to arrange my habit a little;" and Winny, without hesitation, ambled forward to join her tutor.

The party dismounted at the summit of the mountain, and walked forward through a tangled thicket of stunted pines and cedars, and over jagged rocks, to the front of the precipice, where the lover's rock ascended in a bold perpendicular from the river. They seated themselves upon the flat rocks upon its top, the priest occupying the central seat. The view from this summit was sublime, bordering upon the terrific. Behind them was the thicket of stunted pines and cedars that, finding scant root among the rocks, crowned the mountain. Before them was the grand amphitheatre of Shannondale, encompassed on three sides with a crescent-shaped ridge of mountains, the centre of the crescent being Lover's Leap. Below them, at the distance of several hundred feet, rushed the rapid Shenandoah, filling up the pauses in the conversation with its roar; the vale rising from its banks rolled off in green undulations, shaded with groves

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of trees, toward the forest in the background. Half way up the ascent stood old Red-Stone Hall, surrounded with its aged ancestral trees.

"Do not stand too near the edge of the precipice, Miss Harriette. It shelves over considerably. Do not look down, Miss Darling, you may grow giddy and fall," were the warnings given as the ladies arose to take the views.

It was necessary to *one*,—Winny Darling grew pale and reeled away from the edge; the tutor caught her arm. But Harry Joy, with a glad, exultant spring, stood upon the extreme edge of the shelving and frightful precipice, throwing up her arms as if for a leap. Winny screamed. Harriet laughed and sprung backward, again seating herself; and then Miss Hinton, turning to the priest, said:

"Now, Father, for the 'Legend of the Lover's Leap.'"

The old priest bowed himself to the company, and began his tale.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LEGEND OF THE LOVER'S LEAP.

Thus lived— thus died she;—never more on her
Shall sorrow light, or shame. She was not made
Through years, or moons, the inner weight to bear,
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
By age in earth; her days and pleasures were
Brief, but delightful; such as had not stayed
Long with her destiny;—but she sleeps well
Beneath the stream near which she loved to dwell.—*Byron.*

MANY, very many years ago, when this property was in the hands of Bushrod Summerfield, the grandson of Lord Summerfield, the first settler, there came to this part of the country a young Englishman of high rank, and of great

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wealth. He was a colonel in the Hussars, from inclination to a martial life rather than from the necessity of entering the profession. He is said to have been a very handsome man; of tall and commanding stature, with high Roman features, fired by the light of a falcon eye, and softened by an abundance of raven ringlets. His manner, his gestures,—the tones of his voice possessed that marvelous fascination that compelled the love, the adoration of all who knew him. Colonel Clinton had come out only to see the country, at the invitation of Bushrod Summerfield, who, having been sent to England for education, had formed an acquaintance with Clinton at Oxford.

Of course, Colonel Clinton became the guest of Squire Summerfield. At this period a remnant of the tribe of Shenandoah Indians dwelt on the other side of the mountains, with their wandering mode of life. They had a reserved privilege of fishing at a certain place in their own ancestral river. The head of this tribe was a woman—Lulu, the daughter of the great chief, Worneo-at-akuk.

"But I did not know that a woman ever reigned over an Indian tribe—I thought their women were generally degraded," said Sina Hinton.

"They *are*, generally, but not universally, and not so much formerly as *now*. We see by the chronicles of the early settlement of the country, that the custom prevailed to some extent. Lulu was a grand, wild forest girl, of that dark, rich, luxurious style of beauty never seen in the most beautiful of the Caucasian race. Her form was tall and majestic, but beautifully proportioned; a small but regal head, an arched and undulating neck, a fine high breast, rounded limbs, tapering toward the delicate wrists and ankles, and small and elegantly shaped feet and hands—such her form. Her features were of the Jewish style; her complexion was dark but singularly clear, and deepened into a rich crimson in the rounded cheeks and full and arched

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lips. Her eyes were large and dark, full of liquid fire—fierce and soft, as anger or tenderness possessed her; her eyebrows were very black and heavy, her eyelashes long, thick and black, and her hair rolled in shining waves of purplish black nearly to her feet. She usually wore a superb dress of fine scarlet cloth, richly and beautifully embroidered with various colored beads, silks, and gold and silver threads, and fringed with variegated feathers. Her dress was short, and confined to her waist by a belt, in which were stuck one or two elegantly-wrought poniards, purchased from the white settlers. Her neck, arms and legs were bare; three or four rows of bright beads decked her throat, and heavy gold and silver bracelets encircled her wrists and ankles. Her purplish locks, twined with many a gem, hung far below her waist. The fame of the wondrous beauty of the queen of the Shenandoahs had gone all over the whole settlement; and by the braves of her own tribe, the beautiful Lulu was loved, adored, *worshiped* as a goddess, with all the wild enthusiasm of savage idolatry. Her hand had been sought in marriage by the chiefs of other tribes, but Lulu had never felt a throb of love. She seemed something set apart and sacred; the vestal Queen rejected all these offers, with proud and high disdain.

One day there was a great hunt upon the mountains; Squire Summerfield and Colonel Clinton joined in it. The fox, after running a circuit of thirty miles, closely pursued by the hounds and hunters, of whom the gallant Colonel Clinton was the foremost, fled toward the river, took this direction through the thicket straight to this precipice, madly followed by Colonel Clinton on his spirited horse. The fox sprang to the edge of the precipice, paused, took breath, gave one fearful look around, when Coonel Clinton on his fiery horse came thundering on, and took the leap. The fierce horse of the hunter, in the delirium of the chase, sped madly on, and sprang over after the quarry! The hounds

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had started, and stopped short at the brink of the precipice, and now they set up a fearful wail. Other hunters rode up, but seeing no signs of a catastrophe, suspected none; supposing that Colonel Clinton had, upon losing the quarry, taken another road.

Colonel Clinton's brain had reeled, and he had lost his senses at the moment the fearful leap was taken. When he recovered them he found himself lying on a pallet of delicate furs, in a tent hung on the inside with fine yellow cloth richly embroidered with silver thread. The setting sun was pouring a flood of golden light through the opening into the tent, which bathed the dark, bright, glorious form of the Indian queen, who stood in its full blaze. Colonel Clinton strove to collect his thoughts. It was some time before he could recollect what had happened. At last he did; and then beckoning to the dark beauty, who immediately approached him, he said—

"I know what has occurred. I guess where I am—but by what miracle was I saved?"

The queen of the Shenandoahs replied in broken English —"broken music"—that her braves were out upon the river in their canoes fishing; that they had seen the fatal leap, that the horse was dashed to pieces at the foot of the precipice, but that *he* had been caught between the strong forks of a projecting tree a few feet from the summit; that her braves had climbed the rock, rescued him, and brought him to their encampment. Clinton found that both his arms had been broken by the fall, but that they were set, splintered and bound up with great skill, also, that his body was severely bruised. But Clinton thought not of his wounds and bruises—his whole soul was flooded with an excess of glory and of beauty that he could scarcely bear and live. Languid, prostrate and helpless as he was, the approach of the dark, bright luxurious Indian beauty, threw all his senses in a delirium of excitement that threatened the sta-

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bility of his reason. He recovered rapidly, but he had no wish to quit his quarters. Heedless of the anxieties of his friends, he avoided informing them of his whereabouts, lest they should disturb him in his delicious life of blended ecstacy and anguish. You will anticipate the result. He, with his glorious beauty, grace, and eloquence, wooed and won the fierce and beautiful forest queen.

Ah, the tigress grew as gentle as the doe—the queen became the slave! Her warriors saw with a fierce and bitter jealousy the growing weakness of their queen—the discrowning of their goddess. They assembled round their council-fires and talked—they went to her and expostulated. In vain! in vain! She did not heed or even hear them! her soul was absorbed in one idea—one life; her senses all bound up in one ecstatic trance. They met again in council, and, after a deliberate, long talk, they decided that the white intruder should leave their encampment within twenty-four hours at the peril of his life. This decision was conveyed to Clinton the same evening. He assented very calmly. And she! she left her Indian crown—she left her glorious heritage of independence, of love, of worship, and of power, and followed like a slave the footsteps of her chosen master when he bade her follow! A hut in the depths of the forest received the English officer and his Indian mistress. He supplied his wants and hers by hunting and fishing. She cooked his meals and served him fondly. This, you know, could not last long. The highly-educated, highly-accomplished, elegant and fastidious Reginald Clinton, the flower of the young English aristocracy, could not long content himself with a savage, however attractive she might be. After the first ecstatic shock sent to his heart by her dark electric beauty had subsided, his passion waned. And, after he had ceased to love her, her very tenderness, humility, and submission only disgusted and revolted him; he determined to leave her. Reginald

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Clinton had all a fine gentleman's abhorrence of "a scene." He resolved to evade one; so, one day, he took leave of Lulu as if for a day of hunting, and he never saw her but once more. He turned his steps toward Shannondale, where he arrived late in the afternoon. Squire Summerfield received him with surprise and joy, as one from the dead. He told them the story of his rescue by the Indians and of his sojourn among them—but he said nothing of Lulu. Squire Summerfield introduced him to his young sister, Rose Summerfield, for her exceeding beauty called the "Rose of Shannondale." She had just returned from France, where she had been educated, and had arrived at Red-Stone Hall during the absence of Colonel Clinton. Very lovely was the Rose of Shannondale—with her Hebe-like style of beauty, her exquisite form, her fair complexion, with its sudden blushes—her deep blue eyes, with their meek droop, and the clustering auburn tendrils that contrasted so brightly with her snowy forehead and roseate cheeks. Clinton was thrown constantly in her society; and he found her mind and heart richly cultivated and beautiful as her person. He loved her—not with that passionate delirium of attraction that had bound him to Lulu, but with a profound and tender affection, founded upon deep esteem; and an affection that might have possessed redeeming power for him but for his sins against Lulu. A few weeks passed, and Reginald Clinton was the accepted lover of Rose Summerfield; and their marriage day was fixed. Splendid preparations were made. The fame of the magnificence of the approaching bridal spread all over the country. A vast number of relatives and friends were invited. The marriage day came. Evening drew on. The guests assembled. Night was turned to day with the splendor of the illuminations. The marriage ceremony was over, and the company were all in the saloon. Many cotillions were up upon the floor, and the music pealed forth, drowning the

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roar of waters around the vale. Suddenly, in the pauses of the music, arose a wild, unearthly wail! It was so fierce in its despairing woe, that it might well be taken for the death-cry of a soul condemned to eternal perdition. The guests paused and looked at each other. "It is a blast of wind among the pines," said one. "It is the howl of a pack of wolves," said another—and the music pealed forth again, and the dance went on. But again it rose, that fearful wail—piercing the air, and echoed back by the rocks and caverns. It came from the opposite side of the river. The music ceased—the dancers, the whole company poured out into the piazza. There, in the full light of the harvest moon—there, upon the highest summit of the opposite tower-like rock, sat Lulu, Queen of the Shenandoahs, singing her death song. As the bridegroom reached the spot, she ceased—cleared the air with a sudden bound, and plunged into the waters beneath! Such was the end of the beautiful Queen of the Shenandoahs. Such the Legend of the Lover's Leap.

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CHAPTER V.

THE THREE BELLES OF SHANNONDALE.

Harry.—Her waggish face, that speaks a soul jocose,
Seems t' have been cast i' the mould of fun and glee;
And on the bridge of her well-arched nose,
Sits laughter-plumed and white-winged jollity.—*Tennent.*

Winny.—Who does not understand and love her,
With feeling thus o'erfraught?
Though silent as the sky above her,
Like that she kindles thought.—*Gilman.*

Imogene.— Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard—for several virtues
I have liked several women—but she!—oh, she!—
So perfect and so peerless—is created
Of every creature's best!—*Shakspeare.*

THE legend was finished—the priest arose—and taking his staff, stood up in the midst of the party, who, having also risen, surveyed the theatre of the catastrophe.

"Yes," said Harry Joy, "here sat the Indian Queen—discrowned and desolate—before her, from the mansion across the flood, blazed the lights and pealed the music that celebrated her false lover's gorgeous bridal! Here—even from hence, the despairing death-song wailed above the roar of waters and the thunder of the music—and here her wild arms were tossed aloft as she took the fatal leap. I should very much like to see the fellow for whom I would break my neck, or my heart either!" she exclaimed, flashing a glance of defiance around upon the gentlemen of the party, as if she felt disposed to avenge upon the whole sex, the crime of Lulu's betrayer.

Winny stood a little apart—her eyes streaming with

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tears—her form half supported by the encircling arm of her tutor.

"This story moves you!" he said.

"Oh, yes!—because it is *true*. What a picture of love, of wrong, of despair! Struck down from her glorious pride of place!—discrowned—betrayed—forsaken—*alone!*"

"But the priest has not told us—was no effort made to rescue her?".

"Oh, yes!—a hundred young men, the instant that she leaped, threw off their coats, ran down the hill, and plunged into the flood! In vain!—they risked their lives in vain! She never arose to the surface—she was never seen again!"

"And her betrayer?"

"A shadow fell upon his brow that never left it during the short period of his sojourn in Virginia. Before winter he took his bride to England, and he never again visited the New World!"

"The sun is growing oppressive, let us descend the mountain and return to the house," said the priest.

The party turned their steps, and after a short and difficult walk through the rocky thicket, they reached the small open glade where they had left their horses. Stopping to gather some sprigs of green cedar, flecked with tiny snow-white ball-blossoms, they mounted their steeds, and descended the circuitous path leading to the level of the river. They found a fleet of boats moored upon that side.

"Let us leave our horses to be led home by the grooms, and cross the river in the boats," said Colonel Dangerfield.

"No, I thank you, sir," replied Harry Joy; "the river is too high and rough."

"I should not have given you credit for timidity, Miss Joy," observed Sina Hinton.

"No, I am *not* timid! I can ride the wildest, and break the most vicious horse in the mountains, but I can do nothing with the river, in its roused wrath!"

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"Um-m-m," cooed Sina, in assent.

"It may be my bad taste, you see, ladies and gentlemen, but I have an especial objection to a helpless suffocation;" and cheering on her steed, Harry bounded forward, leading the way up the river to the ferry-station.

Her party, upon second thought, followed her. They reached Red-Stone Hall in time to dress for dinner. Mrs. Summerfield received them in the dining-room, with her usual stately courtesy.

At an early hour in the evening the visitors retired to their rooms, to make their toilet for the evening.

There were about two hundred guests expected; and as the shades of night fell, they began to arrive.

The whole front of the hall was one sheet of illumination—the whole extent of the lawn a grove of carriages. Numerous grooms, coachmen, and other servants and attendants of the visitors, filled up the piazzas and the passages. The great saloon was thrown open—a magnificent spectacle! The dark and polished oak of the paneled wall, relieved by large and costly paintings of old artists, all of a character at once scriptural and festal—as "The Feast of the Tabernacle," "The Marriage of Cana," "David Dancing before the Ark of God," "The Prodigal Son's Festival," &c. These pictures were large as life—three on each side of the room—and garlanded with festoons of flowers. The spaces between them were filled up alternately with statues, holding immense wax candles, and immense vases, filled with flowers. The curtains at the windows, the sofa, ottoman, and chair-covers, were all of rich purple damask, fringed with gold. A gallery at the upper end of the saloon held the band. A central chandelier, with a thousand pendent crystals, hanging from the ceiling, poured down a shower of various-colored light, filling the vast saloon with radiance. At the appointed hour of reception, the doors were thrown open, and the band struck

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up a fine, inspiring strain of music. The saloon soon began to fill. It was whispered about that the "Three Belles of Shannondale" were to be present. Two of them were seated side by side on one of the short sofas. A perfect contrast were these two beauties—Harry and Winny. Harry, with her wicked black eyes, and her clustering curls, kinkling like grape-tendrils, in short, spiral, glistening black ringlets around her broad, white, boyish brow—Harry, with her richly mantling, bright carnation bloom, and her saucy arched lips, and arrayed in her showy dress of blue and gold changeable satin, and frisking her saucy fan—and Winny, with her soft, dark-blue, tender eyes, and her long, smooth, pale gold ringlets, drooping down her fair forehead and delicate peach-blossom cheeks—Winny, with her simple white silk dress, and little poesy of pinks. Winny had no fan—she said that Harry Joy raised wind enough for them both. Near them stood the queen of the festival—the beauty and the heiress—Imogene Summerfield—receiving her company. She was supported on one side by the presence of her mother; on the other, by that of her betrothed husband.

Imogene Summerfield—how shall I describe her wondrous, her divine beauty? I feel that my steps are on holy ground as I approach her. Her form was above the middle height, elegantly proportioned, and arrayed in a richly embroidered black lace robe, worn over white satin. The effect of this dress was singularly beautiful. She wore no ornament, except her own long, black, splendid hair, that fell in three divisions of massive ringlets, far below her waist: one down her shoulders behind, and two brought forward, and flowing down in waves of jet each side of her bosom. Her forehead was high and fair; her eyebrows, black, slender, and arched; her eyelashes black, long, and thick—but her eyes—her large, dark, glorious eyes—so profound in their interminable depths of meaning—inlets

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to an unfathomable spirit-world within. She received her guests with a native grace and dignity; yet withal, a half-abstracted air—as she raised her long eyelashes, the light slowly returned to her shadowy eyes, as though the spirit was recalled from a distance.

"And her smile, it seemed half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more rare
Than our common jestings are."

There was something of reverence in the admiration she inspired. There was something of veneration even in the tone and manner of her dignified and gracious mother, as she addressed her. She did not dance. You could not imagine her taking part in the lively cotillions—she did not dance—but when the solemn, half-martial, half dirge-like march of the minuet was played, then, at the earnest request of Colonel Dangerfield, seconded by her mother, she gave him her hand to walk the stately minuet. A suppressed murmur of admiration, mingled with awe, floated around the room as the queenly form of Miss Summerfield sailed on in the majestic measure. Colonel Dangerfield, also, handsome and gallant-looking in his superb uniform, received his share of admiration from the ladies. At the termination of the august dance, Colonel Dangerfield, with a suave and stately courtesy, conducted his partner back to her seat, bowed profoundly, and remained standing by her side.

Miss Summerfield did not dance again, nor did Colonel Dangerfield leave her side again that evening, though from time to time his attention was distracted by the musical laughter or the merry looks of Harry Joy.

Quadrilles again followed the minuet, and Harry Joy bore off the palm in that lively measure:

"Her feet beat witchcraft as she led the dance."

Waltzing succeeded, and Winny Darling excelled in that

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charming, half-caressing whirl. Many people were surprised that Miss Darling waltzed—a young lady carefully reared as she had been by her grandmother—but Winny was entirely too pure-minded to dream that any one saw harm in waltzing. She waltzed with her tutor only.

It was late when the ball broke up. As the night was fine, most of the company returned home, but many remained all night; and for them a sumptuous breakfast was prepared in the morning. Madame Winifred and Squire Darling arrived by dinner-time the next day, and having remained until late in the evening, invited the whole party assembled at Red-Stone Hall to a dinner and ball the next day at Oak Grove. This invitation was of course generally accepted, and Squire Darling and Madam Winifred returned home, leaving Miss Darling, her tutor and her companion still at Red-Stone Hall.

After an unusually early breakfast the next morning, and before the dew was off the grass, the Red-Stone Hall party set out for Oak Grove in the following order—Mrs. and Miss Summerfield, Father Burleigh and Colonel Lee Dangerfield occupied the elegant family carriage of Red-Stone Hall. Sina Hinton and Harry Joy followed on horseback, and Winny and her teacher slowly brought up the rear. Winny was a graceful, but not a spirited equestrian. Her horse was a perfect beauty. It was a thorough-bred Arabian which her father had purchased for her. Seafoam was very small, snow-white, of an exquisitely beautiful shape, with an elegant head, delicate ears, proudly arched neck, from which descended a flowing, soft and silvery mane that nearly reached the ground, with a fine flowing tail like silver floss, slender ankles that gleamed white, and tiny jet black hoofs. He was a perfectly beautiful creature—a poem of a horse. Winny loved him as a brother. His temper was at once gentle and spirited, his action at once swift, smooth and wavelike.

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"I observe you never ride with a whip, Miss Darling," observed the tutor, as he rode by her side.

"A *whip!* Oh! I am so sorry you said *that. A whip* for the proud, beautiful creature! when a mere word will stop him, or a cheer send him flying forward. Oh! it would break my heart nearly if he was once degraded by a blow," replied Winny, caressing her favorite soothingly, as if to compensate him for the gross injury.

They rode on, Sina Hinton furtively watching them.

"The time is ripe," she said; and she resolved to inform against them that very day.

The party arrived at Oak Grove about eleven o'clock. They entered the deep-shaded umbrageous paths that led by a circuitous route to the great green gate admitting them to the grounds about the hall. Again all stopped to admire the green and deeply shadowed lawn, and the mighty forest trees, each standing alone with its great, round, knotted trunk, and its broad, spreading, powerful arms, and its heavy, dark green mass of foliage; all paused to admire the dark, gray, castellated-looking mansion, standing amid the patriarchal oaks. They cantered up to the door, they dismounted. The occupants of the carriage had arrived some minutes before, and were in their rooms changing their dress.

Squire Darling was on the steps waiting to receive them. He was a stout, fair-haired, blue-eyed man, with a countenance expressive of good humor and bonhommie; yet it was the bonhommie of the lion in repose.

Reader, have you ever, in visiting a menagerie, observed that the ferocious among the wild beasts are the most benevolent looking when quiet. See the leopard in repose with his beautifully striped coat, his fur muffled paws, and his soft lips, and gentle, sleepy eyes—he is the very ideal of meekness, love and docility—but rouse him! and there is nothing in the universe more terribly sublime than his

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exploding fury. It is so with the tiger, it is so with the lion, it is so with all the superior animals, it is so through all nature. The most fertile and beautiful countries are the most subject to destructive storms. The most awful volcanoes rise from the midst of the most genial landscapes, and the regions most luxuriant with the lavish bounties of Nature are the most frequently visited by the most fatal earthquakes. The most intense fires burn without often blazing; but when they do flame out, it is with terrible destruction. The deepest seas are silent and beautiful, almost loving, and smiling in their repose; but when they *are* heard, navies shudder at their breath! Godlike or demonlike power in man, beast, earth, air, or water, is not always making a noise—does not carry thunder in its hand or wear lightning in its eyes. Great power is centripetal. But to return.

Squire Darling, with his fair Saxon face, stood genially smiling on the steps of his piazza. Harry Joy's horse galloped up the hill, and she threw herself from the saddle and ran up the stairs, and stood there looking handsome and impudent with her straw hat cocked on one side of her head, and her short curls kinking in bright, black rings on each side of her broad, white forehead, her face all glowing with the exercise of the race, and the triumph of the victory. Winny, Sina, and the tutor were at her heels, however, and were dismounting at the very instant that Squire Darling, seizing both the hands of Harry, said:

"Ha! my little Nimrod, is this you? Hearty and saucy as ever, I see!" and then he descended the steps, and all his manner changed to the deepest tenderness as he folded Winny to his heart, and whispered:

"My dear, dear Winny; my darling, welcome home; your poor father feels so lonely and desolate when you stay away a night, Winny—my own darling, welcome home."

"Indeed I will never go away and leave you again then, papa—that I will nót—for home, after all, dear home, is the

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best place. I get tired of company and great goings-on so soon!"

Sina Hinton came up the steps leaning on the arm of the tutor:

"Miss Hinton and Mr. Ardenne, you are both welcome back. I am glad to see you."

The whole party retired to change their dress for dinner.

Squire Darling followed, with a crotchet in his head. There was a little vein of romance in the broad strata of benevolence in his composition. This sometimes led him to jump to conclusions, not always correct. Miss Hinton and Mr. Ardenne happened to be conversing in a very confidential strain when they rode up together; when they dismounted, Winny, as has been seen, had run forward to meet her father, and Mr. Ardenne had given his arm up the steps to Sina, and they continued their confidential talk until Squire Darling turned to them. Now, Squire Darling had noticed this, and imagined there was a love affair existing between the tutor and the companion. He liked this; this suited him; it assimilated with the warm geniality and bonhommie of his temper—it seemed to him very proper and fitting. Sina is a frank, sincere, brave girl, and Ardenne is a most estimable youth. Poor things! I dare say now they are looking forward to many, many years of waiting before they think they can marry—they are so destitute. But it shall not be so; I will be their providence. I will set him up in business, and they shall be married so soon as they please; for, by St. Peter, life is too short to be passed in waiting. But I must see mother first about it." And as the visitors were all in their private apartments preparing for dinner, the squire, having an hour of relaxation from hospitable duties, went to see his mother in her room up stairs. He found the old lady deep in the perusal of the "Mysteries of Udolpho." Madam Winifred was a tall, thin-waisted old lady, with a long, pale, thin face, with

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a mild expression. She wore a black silk dress, with a white muslin inside handkerchief folded over her bosom, and a white muslin cap, beneath which her silver hair was parted nearly over her brow. She looked so clean, pure, gentle and dignified. It was the dignity of age and goodness rather than of pride, or even of wisdom. The old lady was a devoted Christian, though a bigoted Catholic; and now at sixty-five she was as full of romance as her granddaughter of sixteen; yet it was the high-toned and elevating chivalry of romance akin to religion. And it is to be presumed that it was from *her* the squire derived the romantic alloy in the pure gold of his own sound nature. I have before mentioned the perfect family harmony and unity that existed between the houses of Oak Grove and Red-Stone. I will now inform you that the love and confidence between this mother and son were perfect.

"Good-morning, dear mother; what have you got there?"

"A very interesting new novel from the pen of Mrs. Radcliffe, my son. My grand-daughter, Imogene, who never forgets me, brought it down from Georgetown, for me."

"Yes ma'am. Mother, I have found out a nice little romance in real life! Love is always a romance; eh, mother? And when its happy consummation is almost hopeless, it is a deep romance—is it not, mother?"

"I hope you do not refer to either of my grand-daughters, Miss Summerfield or Miss Darling, my son?" said the old lady, her mild, blue eyes looking very solemnly over her spectacles. "Winny! pooh! Winny's a baby, in love with milk and bread. As for Miss Summerfield—for by my life I never feel familiar enough with my niece to call her Imogene—as for Miss Summerfield, she is enamored of an archangel in the seventh heaven, *perhaps!* No, I speak of Sina and the tutor—they love each other, poor children, and they can never marry unless we help them."

"How help them?" inquired Madam Winifred, whom this

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news did not by any means startle, she having foreseen it. "How can *we* further the wishes of the poor young lovers?"

"'Money makes the mule go'—there is scarcely an enterprise in this world that money will not forward; scarcely an evil in this world that money will not avert; scarcely a good on this earth, that money will not obtain."

"More the pity that we should be so the slaves of lucre," said the old lady.

"Yet, God forgive my levity!" said the squire, with one of his sudden changes from lightness to solemnity—"May God forgive my levity. There was one evil that money could not avert, cannot cure—the loss of my adored wife! and there is one good—one God-given good—the possession of my darling, my blessed, my idolized child—my love-angel Winny!" said the father, with deep emotion.

Ah! Squire Darling, *money* did not purchase your treasure, nor can the *want* of money deprive you of her. But—the pride of birth—the pride of rank—the pride of wealth—the insolence of power—the selfishness of love—the vengeance of jealousy—these will banish your love-angel from you!

"Yes, you wrong your better nature, when you speak so lightly, my dear son. But what do you intend to do in the premises?"

"I intend to have an interview with Sina this very day. I should rather break the subject to her than to Ardenne; confound the fellow, there is a dark, dangerous majesty of manner about him that keeps off near approach. Now, Sina is safe—she is a free, frank, sincere girl; too sincere, I sometimes think. And if, after all, I should possibly be mistaken in my notions—why, it is safer to betray the mistake to Cousin Sina, than to that solemn muzzle-mouthed fellow, that always reminds me of a cannon. There is scarcely, however, a possibility of doubt. And what I mean to do, mother, is to set the young fellow up in any business he

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may select—that is if I have your approval and co-operation, my dear mother."

"Certainly, my son, certainly. You have more; you have my highest approbation and admiration; and you shall have my assistance also. Put my name down for a thousand dollars!"

"Thank you, my good mother. Now I must see Sina before dinner—and I have just time—good-day, till we meet at table, my dear madam."

And Squire Darling hurried out of the room.

The devil was certainly, to use Old Nerve's graphic and expressive term, "waysting"* about Oak Grove that day. Sina Hinton happened to be seeking Squire Darling at the very time he went in search of her. They ran against each other in the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!

'Ill met by moonlight, fair Titania.'

I mean—well met by sunlight, lovely Sina! I was looking for you," said the squire, jovially, as he caught her with a shock.

"And I for you, sir," replied Sina, in a soft, solemn tone, as she receded from his arms.

"Ah! is it so? Come into my study;" and opening an opposite door, Squire Darling led Miss Hinton into a small office-like room, and seating her on an arm-chair, took a common one himself, and leaned his elbow on the little study table that stood between them. "Well, little one, what is it? Come, speak out! Be frank, like your own sincere self;" said the squire, leaning on his elbows, with his bright blue eyes dancing with glee.

Sina dropped her head, let droop her long eyelashes, and replied softly:

* "Waysting"—laying wait—inciting people to evil.

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"Sir, it is a delicate—a *very* delicate subject—one most painful for *me*, especially, to enter upon." She paused in feigned embarrassment.

The squire jumped up, and rubbed his hands for joy and fun. "A delicate subject is it! and for—you—ou—ou!" sang the squire. "Then, by the soul of my father, I know all about it!"

"You *do*, sir!" exclaimed Sina, raising her long lashes, and fixing her fine eyes on him in handsome surprise.

Sina, with her keen perception, saw that he was on a false track, and resolved to make his very misapprehension serve her purpose, if possible.

"You *do*, sir? You *know* this?"

"I '*do sir*,' every whit—every sigh and tear—every hope and fear—every doubt and dread—every blush and palpitation! Oh, my dear, I have sailed in those torrid and tempestuous latitudes myself; and though now anchored in the harbor of age, I have not forgotten it."

"You surprise me, sir!" said Sina, not knowing what else to say.

"I do! Oh, aye! to be sure! certainly! *exactly*! *precisely* so! You impertinent young people think your elders know nothing of such matters. I dare say now, you think me a stern old fellow—one who would persecute a pair of poor human turtle doves—'a very beadle to an amorous sigh'—don't you, you saucy, injurious minx? You would like to consider yourself a persecuted love-heroine, and me a horrible old guardian, or uncle, or father, or something such as we all read of in novels, and such as we hate intensely. I don't choose to play such a part. You shan't have that satisfaction!"

Sina turned extremely pale, as well she might. She thought it unquestionable that the simple squire had divined the whole policy of her diabolical machinations, and designed to frustrate them by an unexpected course. She

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remained perfectly silent, and covered with confusion. A moment's reflection, however, restored her confidence; she put a different interpretation upon the affair. He knew, she thought, of the love of Ardenne and Winny, but not of HER private designs—her self-possession was restored.

"You see I know all about it—nay, look down, girl—I know it all. He's got black hair, black eyes, black eyebrows—looks like the Black Prince, only much grander! He writes tragedies, plays dirges, paints pictures of the Crucifixion, and makes himself, in various other ways, useless and disagreeable; and all because he loves a nice girl, whom he never hopes to marry!" said the squire, looking waggishly at Sina, and pinching her cheek.

"Now, quick as lightning, Sina understood that he supposed *her* to be the object of the tutor's passion, and she determined to use this to *reveal* as by *accident*, rather than to betray by design, the love of Ardenne and Winny. She affected to misapprehend him. She replied:

"Then, sir, *you* knew of this?"

"I suspected it long, but I did *not know* it until this morning."

"Um-m-me," cooed Sina, "then I am relieved, oh, so greatly relieved. Oh, sir! you cannot imagine what a terrible struggle I have had between my duty to you, and my love for Winny and her lover."

"Winny and—her LOVER!! Who? What? In the name of all the fiends below, girl, what do you mean?" exclaimed the squire, turning chalk white, starting upon his feet, and trembling with rage. "Who dares to dispute the heart of my daughter with me? Winny! I would not give her to a crowned king! Reply to me, girl! tell me instantly, on your life! *Who* is this lover of my daughter, that I may——"

"Oh, sir! oh, sir!" exclaimed the cowardly traitoress, paling with alarm.

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"SPEAK, I SAY!" thundered the squire, his face crimson, his veins nearly bursting with fury. "SPEAK, *who* is this lover, that I may KILL him!"

"Oh, sir!—I beg—I pray——"

"ANSWER!" roared the squire, grasping her shoulder, and shaking her violently.

"It—it—it is—Mr. Ardenne!" gasped Sina, in the last extremity of terror at the storm she had raised.

"Ardenne!" repeated the squire, turning pale, and sinking into his seat with a wandering air. "Ardenne!—I am losing my reason—that is the only fact of which I am conscious!"

Sina Hinton took this opportunity of slipping out of the room. She ran wildly up and down the galleries in search of Ardenne; gliding swiftly and darting her head hither and thither like a terrified adder. In truth, she had not expected this typhoon of rage in the father; at most, she had calculated on his moderate displeasure, on his dismissal of Ardenne from the house; and upon that circumstance, with her own machinations, ending in the elopement of Winny—whose place she wished to fill in her father's home and heart. She had resolved, also, before revealing any thing, to bind the simple-minded squire over to secrecy as to her agency in the revelation, so that she should not forfeit the friendship of Ardenne and Winny, or lose her influence over *them*, for that was *very* important, was positively necessary to the success of her schemes. But now no promise of secrecy as to the informer had been obtained from the squire—his blind rage precluded the possibility of the thing—and now all was lost, unless she could see Ardenne before the squire should meet him.

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CHAPTER VI.

SINA HINTON.

"In face an angel, but in soul a cat."—*Wolcott.*

SINA, as we have said, fled about the house like a scared cat, as she was, and finally found Ardenne reading "The Lady of the Lake" to Miss Darling, in the piazza. She sprang to his side—she seized his elbow.

"Come—come with me into one of the distant arbors. I must—I MUST have an interview with you immediately. Nay, Winny, stay where you are," and she drew Ardenne away, who followed her with an amazed air. When they reached the arbor—"All is lost!" she said; "all, all is lost! Oh, Ardenne, forgive me!"

"I do not understand you, Miss Hinton."

"Forgive me! forgive me! That deep—that astute—that cunning squire—that accomplished old schemer—God forgive me—that old serpent, Squire Darling!"

"Squire Darling!—that soul of frankness and simplicity! I do not *in the least* comprehend you!"

"Squire Darling!—that adept in falsehood and duplicity, of which I have been made the silly, wretched victim!" exclaimed Sina, bitterly, wringing her hands with an air of very honest indignation.

"Be so good as to explain yourself, Miss Hinton."

"I will; and do *you* prepare to hear something atrocious. An hour ago the squire called me into his study, and with an air the most benevolent and frank in the

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world, gave me to understand that he knew of your love and approved your suit; nay, asserted in the most positive manner that he knew *all about it;* nay, as he said, he knew 'every hope and fear, every sigh, blush, and palpitation,'—said that he was no persecutor of young lovers—no tyrannical father—nay, he smiled, chuckled, and rubbed his hands—said that you should not have the satisfaction of making him out such—and finally drew me on to admit that there *was* a love affair between you and Winny. It seems that all he wanted was this admission from me, for he no sooner got it than he flew into the most frightful fury I ever beheld in my life. He turned white; he shuddered; his eyes started from his head, and he foamed at the mouth. Then, when I implored mercy for you, for her, and for myself, he grew black in the face—his veins swelled—he pounced upon me, and shook the breath nearly out of my body!"

"Shook *you,* Sina!" exclaimed the youth, with flashing eyes, springing to his feet.

"For Heaven's sake stop! He is your wife's father, or at least the father of one who will soon be your wife."

This was a deep stroke of art on the part of Sina. At the electric words "Your wife," the young man grew pale, and reeled with excess of pleasure. "Wife!" What a magic word! Sina left him to his trance, to his ecstacy; she would not have said a word to break it, as she valued the reversion of Oak Grove to herself; only when he was slowly recovering she said affectionately:

"Yes, Edgar, for you must marry her. Listen, Edgar. Her father, as soon as he can find you, will be brute enough to—not to mince the matter—to kick you out of doors! Now, if any false sense of honor prevents you from taking Winny with you, she will perish here in her desolation. *I know it.* I am in her confidence. I am her bosom friend. She sleeps every night in my arms, Edgar—her

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head upon my bosom, (here was another piece of diabolism), this bosom is often wet with her tears as she murmurs in her slumber of you! If, from any false sense of probity, you fail to take her with you—nay, if you listen to *her own* pleading in behalf of her filial duty, for she is capable of self-immolation, you leave her to a certain death. Believe it! Do not listen a moment to her pleadings of her father and her duty—her duty is to *you*—you are her master—you know it!—fate and nature have made you such. You must use your authority to save her—you must not leave the premises without taking her with you! I will assist you! I am willing to be crucified for my friends, as I have already suffered violence for them this morning."

She spoke with her eloquent eyes fixed on him, her glorious eyes glowing into his. He mused, not quietly—oh, no. Quick flushes swept his face and left it pale with passion; he did not reply. The temptress continued with her soft and pleading, or her high, authoritative and inspiring tones:—

"She loves you tenderly, profoundly loves you; she loves her father, her grandmother, her friends; but the affection she feels for her father, her grandmother, and all her friends put together and multiplied a million fold, would not equal the love she bears to you! Is this love natural? Is it right? Is it heaven-inspired? *You know it is!* Does it give you a claim to her? Does it constitute a Divine marriage of itself? *You know it does!* 'Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!' Do you think these divine words refer to the church ritual by which hands are united so often without hearts? By all the most beautiful things on earth—by all the holiest things in Heaven, I tell you No! It is to the coattraction of your souls! The law that keeps suns in their centres and planets in their spheres, should govern the souls on earth—attraction. You are her sun and she your planet.

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What right has the world, with its impertinent conventionalities, or a father, with his tyrannical will, to sever two souls that love? You are her sun—she your planet; desert her, repulse her, and even as a comet or a lost star wanders in the dark and drear immensity of space forever, so she will be lost in the endless night of death—or madness!"

"Oh, Heaven! speak to me no more, Sina! I must seek an interview with this man! I must see Squire Darling, acknowledge my love for his daughter, and ask her hand. *That* is the course of honor. That I must do. The rest perhaps afterward!"

The youth was about to leave the arbor, but she artfully laid her hand upon his arm and detained him a moment.

"I know," she said, softly and sadly, "I know what will be *my* fate if Squire Darling knows of my further interference in this matter, and particularly of my interview with you; he will turn me out of doors, and I shall be thrown upon the world for support! But never mind, Edgar, never look grave, I do not mind it. I *would* ask you not to say any thing of this interview, nor to mention my name in it in any way; I should ask you to do that, but that my very soul loathes all concealments! Nay, then, tell him, Edgar, tell him every thing, if it falls in your way—and—" with a look of martyrdom—"he must do his worst!"

"I certainly shall not betray your confidence, my dearest Sina. There is no necessity of mentioning your name, and I shall not."

"Yes, *do!* I wronged my own soul and yours when I hinted at a concealment; for my own part, I shall make no secret of the part I take in your affairs, except in what is positively necessary for *your* safety. I should *scorn*—" here her fine eyes flashed and her lip curled—"I should *scorn* concealment upon my own account!"

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"You are a noble girl, Sina—proud, courageous, frank, sincere—but not discreet, not prudent."

"Prudence is a questionable virtue; it is incompatible, oftentimes, with truth, courage, faith, love—every thing that is highest and holiest—every thing that is loveliest and most beautiful! I observe that bad people have vastly more of that worldly commodity than good people. I wonder how it ever came to be enrolled among the virtues; it is some careless haste in the packing up and labeling!" laughed Sina.

The peal of the dinner-bell startled them both.

"Go on," said Sina, "I have got to gather a boquet for Miss Summerfield. I promised to hand her one after dinner."

"Let me do it."

"Thank you—do so if you please, and I will go on," said Sina, who did not wish to be seen entering the dining-room in his company.

Sina came sauntering easily toward the house. She was met in the passage by Squire Darling, who, drawing her arm within his own, said:

"I must apologize for my rudeness to you this morning, Miss Hinton. I do hope that you will forgive the violence of an over-wrought temper, a madness that made the victim miss the just object of his indignation, to let it fall upon the innocent—but never mind, there is time enough!" and his eyes glowed, flashed, and sparkled. "I will not terrify my company, but let them be gone. Curses!—*curses* on this unlucky dinner and ball that delays my anger!"

Sina pressed his hand—Sina looked gently in his eyes—Sina spoke lovingly to him:

"I was so sorry—so sorry—dear me, how I have reasoned with Ardenne about it! I told him that his wooing your daughter was a breach of faith—that it was—"

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"D—l fly away with him! Don't say another word about him, or I shall make a disturbance here!" growled the squire in horrible low thunder.

He led her into the dining-room and placed her at table, where the rest of the company were already assembled. Winny was there, looking pale and anxious, yet uncertain and mystified, as if she felt the storm in the air, but could not see from what point the cloud arose.

Ardenne was the last to enter; placing the boquet in a flower-stand until it might be wanted, he took his accustomed seat at the board. The squire greeted him with an excess of courtesy, amounting to insult. Ardenne, as the tutor, gave precedence to all the gentlemen on that side, and sat on the last seat of the row, and nearest that of the squire, who presided at the feast.

"I have been seeking you, sir," he said.

"I am at your command, sir," replied Ardenne.

"I am advised of the honor you intend me," said the squire.

Ardenne bowed with grave and stately courtesy in reply, and the squire, somewhat mollified by his manner, or recollecting himself as a Virginian, a gentleman, and a host, returned the bow, and gave his attention to other things. Ardenne sat there, but he could not eat; a mouthful would have choked him. He sat there, and feigned with his knife and fork, to avoid exciting inquiry. Winny was opposite to him. As the daughter of their host, she had given precedence to all the ladies of the party, and taken the lowest seat on her side—across the table from Ardenne. Winny saw the by-play between her father and her lover—she saw that he ate nothing—and with all her efforts to restrain them, the tears *would* rise to her eyes. She wiped them away fast as they flowed, but they would fill again. Her father looked at her sternly several times; this had the contrary effect from that intended—Winny sobbed outright!

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"Leave the table, Miss Darling!" said her father, with a severe frown, but in a low tone, greatly fearing that her agitation would draw attention, and dreading a scene. Winny, trembling, arose and left the table. Ardenne arose, with a fierce but steady gaze into the eyes of the squire, and followed her.

"What is the matter?" inquired Madam Winifred.

"Nothing! nothing! but that Miss Darling has turned a little *giddy*," said the squire; and then to himself he said: "Very well, young man, you are 'piling up wrath against a day of wrath!' Go on! you will scarcely elope with my daughter while we are at dinner; and if you *could*, you cannot be legally married in Virginia, thanks to the conservative precaution of our laws!" In the mean time, Ardenne had found Winny in the piazza. He drew her arm within his own, and led down the steps, and out through the shade of the grand old oaks, and through a side gate that led into the deepest shades of the forest. They passed the gate, entered the narrow path, and pursued it until it brought them to a clear spring bubbling from a cleft in a rock; he seated her there on the fallen trunk of a tree, and passing one arm around her waist, pressed her fondly to his bosom, kissed her lips, and looking down lovingly in her face, he said:

"What is the matter, dearest Winny?"

"I don't know, indeed I don't! I know my heart is broken, but I don't know how it was broken, nor who did it. I feel that some woe has come, but I do not know what it is, nor whence it came!" And with a suffocating sob, she dropped her fair head upon his breast, clinging there as if for relief and protection, while she wept. He drew her closer to his bosom; he caressed and sought to soothe her; he stroked her fair ringlets from her brow, and pressed his lips there. At last she wept herself quiet, and gently disengaging herself from his embrace, she sat up. Both were silent, both gazing with a vague, sad gaze upon the ground.

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It was strange that with all this, the word "love" had never passed the lips of either. Soon, taking her hand, he said:

"Dearest Winny, my own dearest angel, I am going away."

She looked at him intently, scrutinizingly, as though she had not comprehended his words.

"I am going hence, Winny."

She looked in amaze — slowly turned very pale, and seemed fainting. He caught her—supported her; then she inquired faintly but anxiously:

"What — what did you say — about — about — *going away?*"

"Mine own love, I am going."

"*You—you—going!* No, no! no, no! that cannot be! *You!* Why should you wish to go? Oh no, do not go!" she said, with a sickly attempt to smile.

"My own, own sweet angel, my precious darling, I *must* go!"

"*Must*—why must? Oh, you will not go, Edgar! You will not go, when you know—if you knew—" She burst into tears, and sobbed convulsively; and then, through her broken sobs, she said: "Listen, Edgar—When we separate at night, I leave you with sadness, to think that for six or eight hours I shall not see you again, and I pray for a sound sleep that the time may be annihilated to me that separates us. I never felt so about my father or my grandmother, Edgar, though I love them. When I wake in the morning, the first thing I think of is, that I shall see you in a few minutes, and that we have a long, long day before us to spend together. Toward evening, my heart begins to sink, for I feel the hour of separation drawing near; I feel it before it comes, just as we feel the dampness of a rain cloud before the shower comes on. This is all mystery to me—perhaps I am wrong to tell you—but I feel as if I

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could tell you any thing in my heart—oh, yes, I could tell you much better than I could my father confessor—and if I tell you any thing that is wrong, tell me so; I will not be angry. I *could* not be angry with you—if I am wrong, reprove me—I shall not resent it; I *would* not resent it, for I know that you care for me." There was so much simplicity, meekness, and sadness in her manner, so much appealing earnestness in her upturned eyes, he fell at her feet, seized her hands, covered them with kisses, and bathed them with tears.

"*Care* for you, Winny! *Care* for you! I love you! love you more than my life, my soul, heaven, god! Love you! oh, my own sweet, sweet, seraph, to save you one pang, I would be *crucified.*"

She stooped forward and threw her arms around his neck, and dropped her head, with all its flowing ringlets, on his bosom, as she softly replied:

"And I—to save you a day's misery—I would be *annihilated!*"

"Crucifixion! annihilation! Why do we talk of these sublime honors, love? I will do more for thee. I will do for thee what millions of our brothers do for our sisters every hour. I will enter a life of hopeless and endless toil for thee, Winny. I will labor for thee night and day, and thou shalt not feel fatigue or know privation."

"Not so, not so! It shall be I who will work for *you.* *I* will be your servant—your slave; and if fatigue comes, if privation comes, oh! it will be passing sweet *when borne for you.* Ah! if *pain* comes, it will bring ecstacy—not agony! Ah, I knew it! It is wonderful—it is beautiful—it is divine—it is *true!* Every pain endured for a beloved and loving one is no longer a pain, but an exquisite pleasure!—the deepest, strongest joy known in life!—a silent, hidden, profound, ecstatic trance of the soul, that brings Heaven down! Oh, my archangel! may God give me the

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heaven of toiling and suffering for you" And she fell again upon his bosom. He pressed her in silence there a a moment, and then a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder and shook him violently. Winny screamed and fainted. Ardenne shook off the hand, raised Winny in his arms, sprang up and confronted Squire Darling!

It was wonderful—the self-government with which the squire deported himself. Only the excessive paleness of his face and the slight tremor of his frame betrayed the hidden rage, the suppressed thunder, that shook him.

"Put down my daughter, sir!" he commanded in a deep, stern voice. But Ardenne stooped, and dipping water with his hand from the bubbling spring, bathed her face.

"Death, sir! do you hear me? Put down my daughter!" he exclaimed, his fingers working involuntarily, as though with difficulty he kept his hands off the young man. Ardenne continued to bathe the face of Winny, who now showed signs of recovery.

"H—ll and furies, sir! will you do as I tell you!" exclaimed the old man, losing all self-command and running upon Ardenne, who, seizing his wrist with one hand, held him struggling at bay while he said:

"I am about to bear her to the house, place her in the care of the ladies, and then, Squire Darling, I shall wait upon you in your study, if you will give me the honor of an interview."

"In the fiend's name go on then, sir! I too am anxious —as a *lover!*—ha! ha!—for that same interview," replied the squire.

Ardenne carried his fair and beloved burden on, closely followed by the squire. She recovered in his arms; and as she lay there she would open her gentle eyes and look at him so lovingly, then close them again in fear.

They reached the house—they entered through a side door. Sina Hinton was in the way. It was *her* arms that received Winny from those of Ardenne.

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"Be tender with her, Miss Hinton—dear Sina, be tender with her," whispered Ardenne, and turning, he bowed and signified to Squire Darling his readiness to accompany him to his study.

"Come on, sir!" exclaimed that gentleman, in a tone as though he said,—"Be hanged, sir!"

Ardenne followed him into his study; they were seated.

"Squire Darling, I love you daughter!"

"The d—l you do, sir!"

"I wish to marry her."

"Zounds!—to hear the fellow's impudence!—to say this to my very face! I never dreamed that he would dare *this*. I thought that he wished to run away with her. Well, let's hear that over again," *thought* the squire, but he *said*, "You wish to—*what*?"

"I wish to marry Winny Darling, sir; and I ask your permission to pay my addresses to her."

"*Good!* I like that!—that's cool and above board! *Hem-m!*—well, what *fortune* are you prepared to settle upon Miss Darling, sir?"

"A sound body and sound mind—a heart that loves her—hands that will labor for her."

"*Very* good!—and Miss Darling, my daughter, the heiress of Oak Grove, is to leave her native halls, her troops of slaves, her luxurious home, her father's protection—for *what*, sir? if it please you to tell."

"For the humble home of a poor and struggling man, sir—for a life of industry, of frugality—for a husband's devoted love," said the young man with much dignity; "and she will be happier so, sir, for she *loves* me!"

"Death and d—n, sir! she loves you *not!* It is a *lie!* and you are a —." Here, losing all self-control—all sense of decency and propriety, the squire broke out into the most violent and shameful torrent of invective and abuse, and concluded by thundering:

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"Get out of my house, sir, or by all that's holy I will kick you out!"

Livid with the rage suppressed for Winny's sake, the young man turned and left the study, and soon after left the house. The squire sank down into his chair, and wiped and wiped again the perspiration from his brow, his heart throbbing as if it would choke him. This loss, this *utter* loss, of all self-command had been what the squire had tried to guard against all day; this was the reason why he had not followed Ardenne immediately when the latter arose and went after Winny from the dinner-table. In his first interview with Sina Hinton the surprise, the violence of the shock his feelings had received, had thrown him off his guard, and he had given way to the frenzy of anger. When that was past, though still in a deep rage, he resolved to guard against its breaking out into fury and alarming his guests; for, as I said, the squire had all the instincts of the gentleman and the host, but the open, upright frankness, which *he* called the "cool impudence" of Ardenne, had driven him mad. Now he sat with his light hair sticking stragglingly out in every direction, with his blue eyes contracted, his fair, red face streaming with perspiration, his fat knees apart, and holding a large straw hat with both hands, as he fanned himself. After a little he got up and rung the bell. A servant answered it.

"Send Miss Hinton to me, sink it!—go and say to Miss Hinton that I beg the favor of her presence for a few minutes in this study."

The servant left the room. In an instant after Sina glided in.

"Sit down, Miss Hinton!—Sit down, my dear! I have sent the young rascal about his business, my dear!"

"Alas, sir, friendly as I feel toward him," said Sina, putting her handkerchief to her face, "I must admit that his expulsion was well deserved."

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"I reckon it was! The insolent fellow had the impudence to ask my permission to marry my daughter. Now, that was a great deal more *assuming* and *presuming* than if he had tried to elope with her," said the squire, wiping his face and furiously fanning himself. "Ah, talking of elopements, where *is* that poor little angel—I mean that wicked little daughter of mine!"

"I carried her to my room, because it was nearest, sir; she is lying on my bed."

Ah! go lock the door!—go at once, Miss Hinton; lock the door, and always keep the key yourself—she shall be in your charge. When she wishes to come out, do not leave her side a moment!"

Now, at first thought, Sina did not like this being constituted Winny's jailer; but a moment's reflection taught her that this was the very way in which she would be best able to assist the intercourse of the lovers and forward her own plans. She courtesied and withdrew from the study to obey the command. She went to her room and found Winny still lying on the bed, with her hands pressed over her face, and the tears stealing through her fingers. Sina stooped over her, kissed her tenderly, and whispered softly:

"Winny, my dear love, your father—your stern, harsh father—has commanded me to lock you in. Have faith in me, Winny; have faith in me, dear child; and by *seeming* your jailer, I shall *be* your friend and assistant. You shall see your lover to-night;" and the girl and double traitress—doubly, trebly steeped in falsehood—locked the door and returned to the study.

Ah! very well—very well, indeed!" said the squire, when he saw the key. "Now, Miss Hinton, is the young villain—the Black Prince—gone?"

"I heard a servant say that he had taken his departure, sir, and that he had left directions to have his baggage forwarded to Harper's Ferry."

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"Very well, it shall be done. Miss Hinton!"

"Sir?"

"You are a very pretty girl; give me a kiss."

"I am a very plain, poor girl, sir, with no dower but my discretion."

"And a very good dower, and by Heaven you shall have a better one," said the squire.

"I offer you my duty, sir; have you any further commands for me?"

"No—yes! *no*—that is to say, I have a question to ask. Has this disagreeable affair got wind among the visitors yet?"

"Not at all, sir. Mrs. and Miss Summerfield are in their chambers, in a remote part of the house, and Colonel Dangerfield is out shooting with Harry Joy, and Father Burleigh has gone to marry a couple."

"D—n 'marrying a couple'—it's all nonsense!"

"Any thing more, sir?"

"No! be off with you, you little prude! you only stay here to worry me."

And Sina Hinton courtesied and glided from the room with a singular smile on her lips.

Sina met the priest as he came from his mission. "Good evening, Father Burleigh," she said, and hastened to take his staff and hat and put them upon the rack, and to offer him a chair in the coolest part of the piazza. "I cannot think where Harry can be," said she, leaning over the balustrade and pretending to be looking eagerly out; then, returning, she seated herself near the priest and said, in her insinuating tones: "What a charming girl your niece is, Father Burleigh; such a remarkable style of beauty, too—such a fine expanded white brow; *does she resemble her mother?*" and Sina fixed her eyes on his eyes, and slowly sent their glances deep into his very soul. "Say, Father Burleigh, does she resemble her mother?"

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The priest grew very pale, and trembled.

"Oh!" said Sina, with a look of deep repentance, "perhaps you loved her mother very much—and grieved very much over her death—and I, indiscreet girl, have opened again the long-closed wound. I am deeply grieved."

The priest arose, tottered, grasped the chair and sank back into it. Sina ran and got a glass of water—gave it to him with the softest words of sympathy and condolence, while her eye, fixed triumphantly, maliciously upon his, said:

"I have the deepest secret of your soul—you are henceforth my slave. You have unbounded or almost unbounded power over your parishioners, over the families especially of Oak Grove and of Red-Stone! You shall use it as I direct." And having driven this stake, she went to her room—and in a disguised hand wrote the following short note to Edgar Ardenne:

———"Your loved one is in the last, the very last extremity. She lies like a flower beaten down by the storm; nothing but your presence will revive her—nothing but your presence this evening, will give her strength to bear the few days separation that must intervene between this and your marriage. Be, at ten this evening, at the place where we talked together this morning, and I will conduct you to her.

"In haste and in peril,
"YOU KNOW WHO."

It will be observed that, in this cautious note, there was neither name, date, locality, or any sufficiently distinct allusion to betray her, even if, as a remote possibility, it should fall into other hands than those intended to receive it. Besides, the hand was an imitation of that of another member of the family. While Sina sealed this letter she looked at Winny. Winny was lying on the bed very quiet,

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with her face half buried in the pillow—apparently, perhaps really unconscious of the presence of any one else in the apartment.

Sina glided from the room down-stairs, and slipped the letter in the post-bag just as it was about to be carried off. "So far, so good! he must think it necessary to carry Winny off to save her life! Now for Winny, she must be made to believe it essential to the continuance of *his* existence, to be carried off by him." And Sina returned to her room, where Winny still lay. She went up to the side of the bed—stooped over Winny, laid her hand gently on the throbbing young head, drew aside the golden ringlets that clung damp to her temples, kissed her tenderly, and murmured, in her soft mellifluous tone—

"Look up, my love; my love-sister look up, and tell me how you are."

Winny's white arms arose from the bed and drew the head of Sina down to hers in silence. Sina sat upon the side of the bed, nestled to her, raised her up, and laid her fair head upon her bosom, stroking her golden ringlets, kissing her, and cooing comfort all the while.

"Sina! what passed between—between father and—and him?"

"My dear Winny! my little love, it is best you should not know!" said the artful girl, with a look of solemn meaning.

This of course terrified the poor child, and stimulated her to fresh and urgent inquiry—as it was intended to do.

"Oh, tell me! tell me, dearest Sina!"

"My love! my little darling—it would only make you more miserable—do not ask me!"

Winny turned deadly sick with fear, and would have fainted but for the mental stimulus of her keen anxiety.

"This dread is worse than certainty—tell me!" faltered the white and trembling child.

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"Well, then, dear child, if you must have it, I *will* tell you. I happened to be in the passage leading to the study —he—your father, I mean, talked loud, and I could not help hearing him. Edgar, like an honorable, high-souled man as he is, did not seek to conceal any thing; he avowed his love for you; admitted that he had nothing but a cabin and a life of industry and frugality to share with you, and—"

"And oh! if father were willing, it would be such a heaven to share that poverty! Oh, it would be a divine joy to work and to bear pain for Edgar," said Winny, clasping her little white hands in a sort of ecstacy.

"The inconceivable little idiot!" thought Sina to herself.

"Well, well! what said father, Sina?"

"He! he broke out into fury! he heaped every sort of obscene and blasphemous abuse upon Ardenne."

"Oh, Mary Mother! Oh, all-merciful Lord!" prayed Winny, with clasped hands and pallid brow—"and Ardenne! and Ardenne!"

"He was *your father*, Winny, and that circumstance struck your lover powerless before him. Any other man but *your father* must have perished then and there by the roused wrath of your lover—the old bear would have been but as a child in the grasp of the young lion. But could he lay hands on *your father*? Ardenne was pale with the passion he controled. He bore the taunts, the insults, the obscene epithets heaped upon his head, with the meekness! oh! with the meekness of the lamb, for your sake, Winny!"

Sina spoke with so much eloquence of words, tones, and gestures, that bad as she was, she must have in a degree felt what she uttered. Winny had been white with terror at the commencement of the description—the tears that had been frozen at their fountain now melted and ran down her cheeks—but the lightning flashed through the shower as she said:

"That contumely should be heaped upon *his* head! My

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noble, my high-souled, my godlike one! My *archangel!* and by *my father!* But *I*—even *I* will compensate him! I, whom they call the heiress of Oak Grove; to whom every one bows with such profound deference; I, before whose small footsteps every one turns aside to make way; I, the only daughter of the haughty Darlings, will show him so much deference, so much meekness, so much submission, and so, if contempt approach, I must absorb it—it shall not touch my archangel! He shall feel that however others, in their blindness, may mistake and contemn him, he is my archangel still!"

"But when do you expect to see him again, since he has left Oak Grove?" said Sina, breaking in upon the maiden's enthusiasm. "What opportunity do you expect to find for all this compensation, my dearest Winny?"

"True! true! Oh, Virgin Mother! oh, pitying Saviour! what will console him in his sorrow!"

"*You will!* You spoke just now from the depths of your prophetic heart. It will be as you have dreamed and as you have said, but you must have faith and courage. Listen! he loves you more than life! to lose you would paralyze all his energies, would strike him with imbecility, he would probably break his heart, commit suicide."

Winny again grew very pale. "Might lose his reason and be sent to the lunatic asylum, and lastly and worst and most probable of all—"

"Well? Well?" gasped Winny, clasping her hands. "Well? Well?"

"Might, and would, it is likely, *take to drink*, and in disappointment and despair become a sot like Mike Langton—think of the degradation upon your archangel!"

"Horror! horror! any thing but *that!* Madness! death! *any thing* that would leave his memory honorable! any thing but that!"

"And it is so often the case—now poor miserable Mike

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Langton was once a young lawyer of great talent and eloquence, the pride of the Virginia bar; it was said that he would certainly have risen to the very highest rank in his profession—he might have been Attorney-General—he might have been President of the United States at this moment, but he loved a lady who slighted his love, he took to drink, and now, at thirty-five years old, he is a *sot*, the scorn of the lowest and vilest, the butt and mockery of negro children—he whose talents opened for him the road to the highest distinction."

"Oh, all-merciful Father! not that fate for Ardenne! Come degradation! come contempt to me rather!"

"Listen again! He will be here this evening. I will admit him when the company are at the height of their dancing in the saloon. He will ask you to fly with him—do not refuse him."

"But, oh merciful Heaven! my poor father!"

"He trampled the honor of your lover under his feet!" said the astute Sina.

The eyes of Winny flashed through their tears. Then Sina said calmly:

"Nonsense! Fathers make a great row *beforehand*, but *afterward* they all become agreeable enough. Your father would never consent to your marriage, but when you are *once* married, he will readily forgive you—how can he help it? What good will it do him to retain his wicked anger; for do you not see, that though his anger might prevent your getting married, and is so far *useful*, yet once married, his persistence in anger cannot unmarry you, and is therefore *useless*. He will be too wise to persevere in what is useless as well as wrong. Besides, as I said, he cannot help it. You are his only child. He loves you—he cannot live without you."

"Ah! what an ungrateful child I should be to leave him, then, my poor, old, fond father—my *good* father!"

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"He called Ardenne a—, and an—, and a—"

"Oh! for goodness' sake, hush! You make me deadly sick."

"I was about to say before you stopped me *first*, that your father, as he cannot do without you, will, when you are once married and the deed is done, receive you back. He loves and will continue to love you. He will forgive Ardenne, and love and honor him for your sake—and do you not perceive that that will even neutralize the disgrace of the abuse he has received—for that which would tarnish the honor of a man coming from *another* man, would lose power coming from his *father-in-law*. It is no dishonor to bear indignity from one's *father*, you know!"

"No, it is not!" replied Winny.

"Come, darling, cheer up—your fate looks smiling enough! I will venture to predict that in one week from this time, Mrs. Ardenne will be receiving the congratulations of her friends in her father's halls!"

"May Heaven grant it," thought the blushing maiden.

"Squire Darling will push the fortunes of his son-in-law, and Edgar Ardenne—with a good field opened to his splendid talents, will rise to the highest distinctions in the gift of our country."

"May the Lord in heaven grant it!" now fervently spoke Winny.

"Winny, darling, if your father knew what an interest I take in your innocent love, and what assistance I render you, he would never forgive *me*, however he might *you*, since *I* have no claim upon him, since *he* has no pardoning love for me. Winny, he would turn me out of doors, and I should be cast helpless on the world."

"He shall never, *never* know it from me, dearest, best Sina!"

"Oh! my dear love, do not so cruelly mistake me—do not imagine that I have any concealments!—I despise con-

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cealments, except in imminent cases, like that of yours and of Ardenne's. No, no, Winny!—tell him, if you like! I do not care if he *does* cast me forth! I despise secretiveness, and I am willing to be killed for my friends!"

"Oh, brave and frank Sina! do not be rashly candid!—I am younger than you, and yet I find it necessary to warn you not to be so defiantly frank. It is worse than useless to beard my father with such an uncalled-for frankness. As for me, I would not for the world hint your generous, self-devoted participation in this—your disinterested participation, that brings you no good, while it exposes you to such risk!"

Sina smiled to herself—her end was achieved—secrecy as to her interference was pledged from Winny, as it had been from Ardenne, without her seeming to care that it should be so.

"Now, love," she said, kissing her, "you are not able to go down into the ball-room to-night—you must remain here—I will send you some tea and toast;" and Sina arose, and left the room. On the first landing, she met Squire Darling.

"How is my little unfortunate?"

"Oh! more cheerful, sir!—far more cheerful, but not able, I think, to bear the excitement of the ball-room."

"We must make excuses for her, and try to let her absence be as little observed as possible. Fortunately, my good mother has retired to bed, without having inquired for her—imagining her, I suppose, to be in the chamber of her Aunt Summerfield."

"Um-m-me," cooed Sina, "that is *so* well! It would be such a pity that the dear old lady should be disturbed."

"Sina!"

"Sir!"

"On my soul, Sina, you have got the sweetest, softest voice in the world! It—it's perfect *music!*—it's—it's

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cotton-wool!—one could *sink down* into it!—it—it makes me feel *lazy*—it—it—it is *oil!*—it *runs all over me!* Sina, I'm doomed! if I know what to do!" He caught both her hands in his. She raised her large dark eyes to his. "And your eyes!—two large, soft, floating worlds, that make me sea-sick!—there!—go!—or I shall make a jack-ass of myself!" and whirling her away from him, the squire waddled off.

"Why, what a disgusting old soul! I do hope he has not taken it into his head to fancy me for a wife; that would horribly defeat my purpose to be his daughter!" said Sina, looking back after him, with a mixture of perplexity and contempt. Then she ran down-stairs, and encountered Colonel Dangerfield and Harry Joy, just as they returned from their sporting expedition. Harry's broad white brow shining between its clusters of short-clipped black curls—her straw hat hanging on one arm, while a short fowling-piece rested within the other.

"You are late, miss—much of the expected company have arrived, and are in their rooms, changing their dresses."

"Yes, I know it! and there are more coming! I have had to run the gauntlet, in a manner, between rows of carriages and saucy, inquisitive negroes!—But never mind, Colonel Dangerfield was at my side!" and Harry let fly a bright glance at the gentleman named.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE SALOON AND THE BOWER.

A thousand hearts beat happily, and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes that spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell.
* * * * * *
Partings such as press
The life from out young hearts; and choking sighs
That ne'er might be repeated.—*Byron.*

WE will take a glance into the saloon first. Only a glance, for Winny is absent—Winny, who, as the daughter of the host, should be "the bright particular star," "the star of that goodly company." Miss Hinton, arrayed in a mazarine blue satin that became her dark style well, and having her hair in long black ringlets, received the company with much grace. Squire Darling stood on her right, his stout figure and fresh toilet, his fair Saxon face and fair curling hair looking the very picture of a debonair country gentleman. No one, as he smiled and bowed and wiped his brow, and welcomed his guests, and chatted to his attractive assistant Sina—no, not a soul would have believed that he had, in a manner, just kicked the tutor out of doors and locked his daughter up. And as for Sina—*who*, to see her smiling and cooing, patronizing or consoling, could have believed that she was at the bottom of all the trouble? Sina coos to him, smiles on him, and leans heavily upon his stout arm. He holds *her* arm rather tighter than strictly necessary, clipping it close to his side; he holds her vinaigrette, and wields her fan, and presents every

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stranger who comes up—to "My cousin, Miss Hinton, of Georgetown."

Imogene Summerfield, Queen of Beauty, held her stately court at another end of the room. Mrs. Summerfield sat on her left hand. Col. Dangerfield stood behind her chair, partly reclining upon it as he conversed with her. General M———n, General G———s, Col. Y———s, the Hon. I——— R———e, and others, of the most distinguished men of that distinguished epoch, stood around her. Harry Joy held her little coterie of mad-caps in the middle of the floor, under the great central lamp, and just now Harry's silver laugh was the most pleasant sound heard in the room. And, as the music struck up, a dozen hands pressed eagerly forward to engage Harry for the set; but the laughing girl whirled out of their ring, and, pirouetting away, said that she had promised Sina Hinton to dance with the squire. She was at his side, panting and laughing.

"So, you see, Squire Darling, I 'memorized,' as old Aunt Nerve says, my engagement; I thought perhaps that you would not 'memorize' *yours*, so I came to fetch you!"

"Well, mad-cap! I am your very humble servant, if Miss Hinton will excuse me."

"Of course Miss Hinton would." She smiled, cooed, courtesied, and they left her to take their places at the head of the dance. Sina waited till they had fairly begun the quadrille, and then she mingled with the crowd and unobservedly left the room. She paused in the hall, and looked at her watch in trepidation—it was a quarter past ten—she hurried on, fearing that Ardenne might have left the arbor, despairing of seeing her. She reached the arbor, entered—he was there. He started up, saying:

"My dear Miss Hinton, thank you! I have been waiting here two hours."

"I was afraid you had left."

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"I should have waited here till midnight."

"U-m-m-me," cooed Sina. "I feel so sorry that you had to wait; but in truth this is the first moment at which I could escape from the ball-room—the first moment, indeed, when it would be at all safe for you to enter the house."

"I came with no such purpose, but only to hear of Winny—how is she?"

"Winny is half dead—most anxiously expecting you! and yet you say you came with no such purpose *as entering the house!*"

"Alas! Miss Hinton, shall I re-enter as a thief the house from whence I have been driven?"

"Ardenne, you break my heart! *Why* do you talk so? Heaven knows that I would be the *very last* to advise you to a dishonorable course! But how now? The young mistress of the house invites you to enter it—implores you to come! Ardenne, if *you* had seen her as *I* have seen her to-day—broken, prostrate, tearful, like a rain-beaten lily;—pale with dread for you, pale with anxiety again to see you, yet uttering high words of hope and courage, because she *expected* to see you!—but I ought not to tell you this—I betray the confidence of the sweet girl, who even now lies resting her fair head upon her dimpled elbow, listening for every sound, hoping it to be us! and sinking back to disappointment as it ceases!"

"Lead on, Miss Hinton! I follow you," said Ardenne, unable to resist the vivid and tempting picture presented to his imagination.

They left the arbor. They made a circuit, and reached the house by the back way.

"We can enter unobserved, for even the servants are all collected in the passage," said Sina.

They passed in without attracting attention, and reached the chamber mutually occupied by Miss Darling and Sina

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Hinton. Sina was about to withdraw, but Ardenne drew her in, saying:

"No, you must not leave; for *her* sake you must be present during this interview;" and Sina, who desired nothing better, accompanied him in.

Winny had risen and seated herself at the window. Ardenne entered—a strange awe creeping over him to find himself in Winny's sacred chamber. She arose and fell weeping into his extended arms; he pressed her to his bosom, caressed and soothed her, then reseated her, and stood deferentially before her.

"You will, you will forgive my father's violence, Ardenne?"

The color rushed to the young man's brow at the sudden recollection—he was silent.

"Father will be sorry for it—he will bitterly regret it. Ah, Ardenne, it has shaken to its foundation the affection of his only child for him. You will forgive him *now*, Ardenne!"

Edgar choked with his effort to govern a strongly-rising emotion.

"You know, Ardenne, that he is so much *older* than you—age, like womanhood, has a certain privilege—a man of honor may take a good deal from the one or the other, without being called upon to resent it! Say, you will not harbor resentment against my father? Nay, at least *speak* to me."

"Winny—dearest—I love you more than life! Will *that* content you?"

"No—no—*now* it will not!" said Winny, trembling violently. "Forgive my father—nothing else will content me!"

"Winny! does he *ask* forgiveness? Winny, there are words never to be forgotten or forgiven, until the *injurer* seeks that forgiveness!"

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"Oh, I shall suffer so much between you both, if you are not friends. Bethink you! my father is proud and violent tempered—"

"And Edgar is high-toned and sensitive—you ask impossibilities of him, as yet," said Sina Hinton; "the memory of his wrongs is yet too fresh; have patience, all will be well."

"Ah!" said Winny, through her tears, "I should perhaps rather ask forgiveness for myself for recalling it to your mind, Ardenne. I will say no more about it; sit down by me, Ardenne."

"Darling Winny! this I *will* promise you—I will never be provoked by any thing your father may say or do to me, to any retort upon him—and, Winny, I will *try* to forgive him. And my own blessed angel, you will teach me how!"

A burst of music from the saloon pealed into the room.

"Come! dear Edgar, and dearest Winny, you must make this interview short. They have just commenced the last quadrille of the set. At its close the squire will be looking for me—and Edgar! A word with you." She drew him apart. "Do not be weak, do not leave her here to die of a broken heart—marry her—all will be right in a few days."

These words were hastily whispered, and Sina retired to a distant part of the room, under the pretense of arranging her black ringlets, and the folds of her deep blue satin before the dressing-glass.

"And must you go so soon?" said Winny.

"My dear love, *yes*."

"So soon! and when will you come again?"

He looked at her sweet, wan face; it had grown pale and peaked by a few hours of grief; but even *that* could not mar its extreme beauty. How earnest, how anxious, how imploring she looked, with her delicate, pale, rose lips breathlessly apart; her deep blue eyes, their lashes spangled with tears, raised to his. He resumed his seat at her side, took her hand, and said:

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"Winny, it depends upon yourself whether or not I ever come again!"

"Then *indeed* you will come again."

"Winny, if I come again, it will be to take you hence as my wife."

She clasped both her hands together and shuddered with a strange wild blending of fear and joy. He was looking at her earnestly, sadly, almost solemnly.

"Winny, I will not deceive thee; if thy father will not forgive thee, Winny—"

"Oh, but my father *will*—he *will!*"

"Yet, if he should not, Winny, our life—*thy* life will be one of great toil, of great privation. With his countenance, with his interest and influence, without the slightest pecuniary assistance from him—which, indeed dear Winny, I should be loath to accept—I should prosper; but if he were to set his face against me, it is due you to tell you this, my love—if he were to set his face against me—there is not a father in the State but would take sides with him; and success here would be impossible, and my poor Winny would have to suffer extreme poverty *here*, or exile to some far Western State."

"Ah! if my father *should* be relentless, that, in itself, would be the very worst calamity that could fall upon us! Nothing, after that—no labor, privation, poverty, could affect me much—but that will *not* be the case; father—my dear, good, tender father, is passionate, but forgiving. I know he *will* pardon. Sina, who knows him well—Sina who is not biased by her feelings—Sina, who has so much judgment, *says* so. Come here, Sina."

And Sina glided from the other end of the room, to the side of Winny, caressed, cajoled, soothed, reassured her.

It is useless to repeat the persuasive sophistries of this unprincipled and dangerous girl. It is sufficient to say that then and there the plan, the time and place of the elope-

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ment were arranged. Ardenne took his leave. Winny sunk weeping upon the false, soft bosom of her treacherous friend. Sina laid her down, and returned quickly, and with some trepidation, to the ball-room. All was safe for her there, however.

"Where have you been, you wretched little flirt?" questioned the squire.

"With Winny."

"Ah, you spoil that naughty child. Poor little thing—how is she?"

"Very well! Asleep, I believe now."

"Ah!—hum! I knew she would get over her crying fits and fainting fits! That's right!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAUNTER OF THE SACRED HEART.

It was about to speak—* * * *
And then it started like a guilty thing.
But soft—behold, lo! where it comes again:
I'll cross it tho' it blast me—Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use a voice,
Speak to me!—*Shakespeare.*

Down in one of those picturesque gaps of the Blue Ridge, watered by a branch of the Shenandoah, stood the old Catholic chapel of the Sacred Heart, erected by the first American Summerfield. It was a small Gothic building, constructed of red sandstone, in the form of a cross, with a tower and steeple at the end. It was surrounded by a graveyard, in which reposed the mortal remains of all the Summerfield family. Adjoining this chapel was a small

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cottage, built also of red sandstone, and surrounded with a small garden-yard; further off, an orchard of various kinds of fruit trees. This modest dwelling was the home of the old priest, Father Burleigh, his niece Harry, and his housekeeper, Miss Matilda or Mattie Smilie, an ancient maiden and a lay-sister of the order of Mount Carmel. It was a very poor-looking house for a clergyman. It wanted all those little comforts and luxuries with which zealous Catholics love to surround their fathers in the Lord. Not but that the few parishioners of the old priest were kind and liberal, and wished to enrich him, but because they *were* few, and numbered among them but three wealthy heads of families —namely, Squire Darling, Mrs. Summerfield and Colonel Dangerfield; and the munificent gifts of these three were scattered among the surrounding poor of every denomination. Father Burleigh kept his vow of poverty in spirit as in letter. Nevertheless, sometimes Father Burleigh gave little feasts to his "children," and filled his small house and grounds with the old and young of both sexes of his flock. The whole glen, containing the chapel, with its graveyard, and the cottage with its grounds, was cut off from all other neighborhoods by high, pine-covered mountains, and watered by the Sacred Stream, a branch of the Shenandoah. It was a very lonesome place. Night came sooner, and lingered longer there than anywhere else. Day came later and departed sooner. The sun was some time in reaching the top of the East Mountain, and then in a few hours it would cross and sink behind the West Mountain. One narrow path led down between these mountains to the glen; this was used only by horse or foot-passengers. Carriages approached from the opposite shore of the river, crossing by a ferry-boat—the ferry-house being on the said opposite side.

One night, about a week from the events of our last chapter, in the nicely-sanded kitchen of the priest's cottage,

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glowed a dull fire, by the murky light of which sat two persons talking very earnestly. The first was Miss Smilie, the lay-nun and housekeeper. Miss Mattie Smilie was not the stereotyped old maid of popular literature. There was nothing stiff in her manner, or sour or bitter in her heart—neither was she tall, prim and angular, as the model old maid of novels ought to be. She was exactly opposite. She was short, fat, fair, with gray hair, nay *white* hair, not ashamed to show its silvery softness under her clean white cap—with smiling blue eyes and smiling lips,—in fact, with a smile all over her face, half beatifiaction, half bonhommie. Indeed, folks who loved the dear old lady used to laugh to think how well her soft merry name, suggestive as it was of all pleasant and kindly things, described her in itself. How full of goodness and humor her quiet smile was! But *now*, as she sat picking cotton in the old elbow chair, and talking earnestly with her companion, her smile was somewhat grave. That companion was no other than Angela, the old negro housekeeper of Red-Stone Hall, sent by Mrs. Summerfield, with presents of preserves, pickles, cordials, &c., from the "new stilling" at her house. Their conversation had commenced lightly enough. Angela, or "Gelly," as the invariable habit of abbreviation dubbed her—Gelly had entered with the basket on her arm, had saluted the housekeeper respectfully, and had sunk down heavily—for Gelly was a weighty body—into the chair set for her by Miss Mattie, and had begun her talk before she noticed the unwonted gloom upon the usually pleasant countenance of Miss Mattie Smilie.

"I have fotch over some pickles and 'serves and cordials, as the madam sont for ole marser."

"Mrs. Summerfield sent for Father Burleigh?"

"Yes, chile, we-dem jes done a doin' of um this evenin'. We-dem been very busy up there at the Hall! I 'clare to my hebenly Marser if I ain't all but runned off my legs.

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There's two cotton carders, and two woolen carders, and two cotton spinners, and two woolen spinners, and a cotton cloth, a woolen cloth, and a linen-cloth weaver, and a carpet weaver, and a counterpane weaver, all for me to look arter in the factory-rooms, and then there's the 'serves—"

"Haven't you almost done preserving?"

"Lor', chile, *no!* We done put up the cherries and strawberries and raspberries, and made the blackberry jam and cherry bounce, and all that as comes more yearly in the season like, but lor! you know, chile, the worst part of the 'serving and stilling is to come yet, when the quinces and the pears and peaches, and the citrons and melons come on; and then we've got to make peach brandy and currant wine, besides currant jelly and apple brandy, and the elder wine. I 'clare to my hebenly Jesus ef I ain't all but ready to drap right down!"

"Well! never mind, when the stilling and pickling and preserving is all over, you can rest," smiled the good-natured Miss Mattie.

"Rest! catch me resting! You want this nigger sold to Georgy, don't you? No, indeed; arter 'stilling and 'serving is over, then there comes more pickling', and then arter that cuttin out the niggers' winter clothes and makin' of um up, and then hog-killing and beef-killing time, and meat-curing time—the Lord have massy upon us, it ain't a nothing but one thing arter another from one year's ind to the t'other!"

"But you don't have to do it yourself."

"No, but I haves to see arter it all. I haves to walk arter them there lazy niggers from mornin' *till* night. If I *didn't*, not one of them there huzzies would do a single stroke of work! Not one of them yearns their salt, anyhow. Lord a-massy! I wish I was their mistress, *I'd* make some on 'em jump!"

"Mrs. Summerfield is merciful."

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"'Taint no massy to spile a raft o' lazy niggers! 'Twan't so in *ole* madam's time! I gits out o' all manner of patience a-trotting arter them there galls!"

"You must bear your cross cheerfully."

"I do! I totes my crosses as strong as anybody does, only I get tired and mad sometimes."

"You should take patience."

"I *do!* I takes so much patience that I'm afeard there is not any left for anybody else, and it makes me feel like a thief."

"The Lord's treasury is infinite—the more you take out of it the more is left behind; and you do not rob, but enrich others by drawing freely from it—for example spreads—'a little leaven leaveneth the whole.'"

"A *what?*"

"I mean the virtue of one person in a community is like a spoonful of brewer's yeast in a batch of dough—it goes through it all. Example is catching."

"I hope it ain't about here! Oh, yes! I see! if I have patience, people will catch it from me like the small-pox!"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I must try—but Sam waystes round me a good deal!"

"Every one has their trials, Gelly!" said Miss Mattie, with a meek smile—"*I have mine!*"

"*You* have yours! What are they? Won't Miss Harry mend her stockings?"

".Worse than that!"

"What then?"

"I'm haunted—a speerit walks about here!"

"Oh-h-h Lor-r-d!" cried the old woman, casting a fearful glance around her.

"Truth I'm tellin' you! it walks in the church-yard about this time o'night!"

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the old woman, crossing herself.

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"Yes!"

"How long?"

"Why, you see, I'll tell you—" said the old lady, in a mysterious whisper. "Yesterday—no, the day *before* yesterday—Harry went to spend the day out. Well! in the evening a messenger comes after Father Burleigh to go and confess a penitent that was about to die. Well! there was a thunder-gust coming up, but Father Burleigh never stopped for *that*. The storm arose just about the time he was a setting off, but on he went. I was left alone here in all the storm—but still I was better off than he who was exposed to its fury. Well! it stormed very hard, but it was very soon over. And when night came on I began to think of going out into the pines to get brush and pine-knots to make a quick fire to get Father Burleigh's supper. "Well, child, bless your soul—I put on Father Burleigh's long coat—*his old one*—to keep the damp out, and I goes out. It was pitch dark, and nothing to be seen but the lonesome stars, and nothing to be heard but the roaring of the river, flooded by the rain. Well, child, I went over the stile into the church-yard to get to the forest, the *nighest* way and the *driest* way; and I was about half way across the ground, there by the grave of old Mrs. Summerfield, when I happens to look up, and lo and behold! there stood a figure, three feet in front of me—shining white in the black darkness! I like to fainted; I don't know what kept me up. There it stood! with its black hair streaming, and its black brows frowning, and its pale cheeks white as the clothes it wore."

"It was an optional illusion."

"A what?"

"An optional illusion—that is, seein' a thing that ain't there!"

"Yes, but *it was there*, child! and I like to have dropped down; hows'ever, I turned right round and went back

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and turned into the spring-road. Well, child, I went on a few yards and I come nigh the spring, and I looked up—and there stood the speerit right before me again! My heart sunk right down, and my head spun round—and—well, I turned back a second time, and thought I would go home—for it seemed like a tempting of Providence to go on. Well, child, true as I am telling of you—I went up the narrow path a trembling so I could hardly stand, for there warn't a yearthly soul on the premises but myself and the speerit. Well, child, just as I got almost home, I heard a sigh—and looking up to see where it come from, *there stood the speerit!* I bursted out into a perspiration, and I said, 'In the name *off* the Father, and *off* the Son, and *off* the Holy Ghost, what do you want?' Well, as soon as the speerit heer'd that it vanished."

"De Lord!!"

"Yes—well I don't know how I ever got to the house. Father Burleigh came home late that night, and I told him all about it; but he wouldn't pay any heed to it—he said it was 'imagination.' Miss Harry didn't come home that night, and she hasn't come home yet. *Yesterday* morning Father Burleigh went over in Farquier to see a sick 'oman and staid all day. When night came I expected him home, and went out to pick up chips to get his tea. Well, child, I took another track. I didn't like to go nigh the graveyard, and so I turns up the path leading *away* from the glen up the mountain behind. Well, child, it was yearly in the evenin' and I can't say as I felt *much* afeard; but God bless your soul, as I looked up, 'way up the hill and a-coming down was the speerit, with its black hair and ghastly face, and its white robe, all shining in the starlight."

"Hush, honey!"

"I turned and ran. Father Burleigh came home yearly this mornin', and I told him that I had seen the speerit

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again, and when and where I had seen it. Well, child, *this* time he listens to me, and to-night—*this very* night, he says he'll keep watch for it himself!"

"Hush, honey!" again exclaimed the half-terrified, half-incredulous negress.

"I have my thoughts. I think it is some perturbed speerit from Purgatory, who wants masses said for the repose of its soul!"

"De Lord Jesus! I shall be afeered to go home to-night. I thall stay here 'long o' you till morning, honey!"

"So do. My goodness! here comes Father Burleigh now, and the tea-kettle ain't on for tea!" said the bustling little old housekeeper, fidgetting about the kitchen to prepare supper.

The priest entered the kitchen, leaning heavily upon his staff. He laid it down, put off his square-topped cap, and sank wearily in his chair, without speaking. Old Gelly arose, courtesied, and respectfully remained standing, while the old man's tea was getting ready.

"Has Harriette returned?" he asked, with some anxiety, of the housekeeper.

"No, sir."

"Where is she?"

"Your reverence knows, sir, that Miss Harry left here to go to Oak Grove. I suppose she is there, with Miss Winny. Though Miss Harry and Miss Hinton are the best friends."

"Miss Hinton! I utterly object to that association, Mattie. If Harriette returns while I am out to-morrow, *tell* her so!"

The placid housekeeper promised compliance, and set the tea on the table.

The old priest changed his boots for slippers, and drew his chair to the table.

When supper was over, and the table-cloth removed, and

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the reading-lamp lighted and set upon it, and Father Burleigh had taken down a volume of the "Lives of the Saints," and laying it on the table, had opened and commenced reading, Miss Mattie went up to him, and with a meek, half-chastened tone, said—

"Have you forgotten, Father Burleigh?"

"Forgotten *what?*"

"The poor souls in purgatory."

"By no means, my good Mattie—what mean you by the question?"

"I mean, you know, the *speerit* I saw!"

"Oh, nonsense, my good soul! Some mischievous person is practicing on your credulity, to amuse him or herself with your fright."

"But your reverence promised—"

"I promised to investigate it. I will do so;" and the old man, resuming his cap and his staff, went forth.

It was very dark; the lofty mountains loomed gloomily into the clouded sky; the hollow moan of a rising wind through the forest, and the hoarse murmur of the swollen river, as it swept past, were the only sounds that disturbed the otherwise dead silence. The priest looked around upon the murky darkness of the sullen scene, and seemed to find a morose pleasure in its assimilitude to his own soul; then, with an imperceptible smile at his own credulity, he turned his steps to where the white tombstones of the church-yard gleamed faintly out in the darkness. He passed the little gate, and was within the enclosure. Nothing was to be seen but—*near*, the white and spectral-looking tombstones, and—*far*, the dark and looming mountains; and nothing was to be heard but the hollow groans of the wind among the mountain-pines, answered by the hoarse moan of the river at their base. A vague, but awful terror or presentiment—or some equally fearful influence, weighed down the spirit of the priest, and he was about to retrace his steps, when—

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"*At last!*" exclaimed a thrilling voice, near him.

An icy chill ran through the veins of the priest—his blood curdled. He was neither cowardly nor superstitious; but the time, the place, the circumstances, his shattered nervous system—certain dark memories of the past, all conspired to betray his courage. He looked around, but saw nothing—nothing but the old chapel, the spectral tombstones, and the giant mountains.

"Who speaks?" he asked, in a quivering voice.

"*Who listens?*" was the response.

"It is I—Father Burleigh—pastor of the Sacred Heart Parish—and who art *thou?*"

"*One who knows the deepest secrets of thy soul, Barnabas Burleigh, pastor of the Sacred Heart!*"

Again the blood of the old priest was turned back in its course.

"And what—what would'st thou with me?" gasped the unhappy man, as his knees smote together.

"*Follow me!*" replied the voice; and at the same moment a figure clothed in white emerged from the deep darkness, and glided up the path before him leading to the chapel.

The priest followed, with tottering steps, despite the support of the staff he leaned upon.

The figure paused at the church door.

"*Open it!*" said the mystery, receding, and leaving the way unobstructed for the priest to pass.

Father Burleigh stooped, and drawing the key from its hiding-place under the door-step, unlocked the door and entered. The white figure glided after him. The priest gained the steps of the altar, struck a light, and turning with a newly-summoned courage—for there was a feeling of sanctity, of safety, in the walls of the church, in the precincts of the altar—he flashed its light upon the advancing figure, and said, in a stern voice, and with a frowning, though pallid brow—

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"Come!—approach, intruding spy!—reveal thyself!"

The figure walked straight up the aisle, paused before the blazing torch, threw back a large, muffling, white muslin vail, and revealed the face of Sina Hinton, sparkling with the light of its insolent defiance and malignant joy!

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathomed gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy,
By the perfection of thine art,
That passed for human thine own heart.
By thy delight in other's pain,
And by thy sisterhood of Cain,
I call upon thee, and compel
Thyself to be thy proper hell.—*Byron.*

"DARK, dreadful girl, what would'st thou with me?"

It was some moments before she replied; and in that time her eyes were fixed upon his as though she would strike that sharp, bright glance deep into the profoundest depths of his soul, and read there how much of principle might remain to defend—how much of fear to betray him nto her power.

Alas, the eyes of the anointed priest quailed and fell before those of the sinful girl.

Then she laughed aloud and said: "Oh, I have no secrets from *you*. Come hither, father," and drawing him into a side pew, she sat down before him. The priest trembled in every limb, and covered his face with his hands. "I looked into your soul just now to satisfy myself of what

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I almost knew before—that is, that I should find a coadjutor—not a betrayer in you!"

"Lost girl! That your purposes are all bad, I read in the fiendlike exultation of your countenance. *Dare* you count upon my co-operation?'

"*Yes; I am mistress of your secret!*"

"And though that secret, wretched girl, should consign me to a—'

"*Scaffold!*"

The old man shuddered from head to foot as he faltered:

"And even then, detestable girl, do you think that I will lend myself to any wicked purpose of yours?"

"*Poh!*" exclaimed Sina with infinite disgust. "You judge *my* purpose by *your* past. I have nothing in hand at which your moral cowardice shall shrink, for I have nothing in hand that shall break any one of the Ten Commandments, or any law of the land—*as it happens.*"

"*As it happens!* And if it were otherwise?" inquired the priest, fixing his piercing black eyes upon those of Sina, and seeming for the moment even to lose his fears in serious contemplation of this singular being.

She did not quail under that glance, as she replied boldly: "If it were otherwise, it would make no whit of difference with *me*, whatever it might with you."

"Audacious girl, you glory in your wickedness!"

"I TRIUMPH IN MY POWER!"

"Woman, you are transfigured before me. Your eyes flare—they flame. You are a fiend!"

"You have a fine imagination, father, though rather a diabolical one. Fine as that of the moonstruck poet, Ardenne, who calls me an angel, and whose fancies, in contradistinction of your own, may be called celestial. Now, neither of you have hit it. *This* is the truth. There was in me, as in you, and in us all, originally, an angel and a devil, striving for pre-eminence. They kept up in my soul

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such an eternal war, that I had no peace between them; so I just strangled and cast out the angel, and the fiend has quiet possession. I advise you to do the same."

The priest was leaning over the front of the pew, contemplating her as she sat there. "Satanic wisdom!"

"Discord in the soul is weakness—war in the soul is impotency. So long as the good and evil strive in us, we have no will, no individuality, no life; it is only at the *end* of the struggle that we are born into life—the life of an angel or of a devil, even in this world; and that life brings power—grand power. Napoleon never would have been emperor, if he had not possessed a vigorous will, and early put an end to the inner struggle—early strangled and cast out the angel. The life that you see around you is not life, but a chaos of good and evil impulses, in which individuality—'myself'—is lost. Three destinies await the soul at the death of the body—angel-life, demon-life, or annihilation. Angel-life to those who have expelled the fiend, demon-life to those who have cast out the angel, annihilation to those weak souls lost in the struggle. As weak infants perish in the crisis of birth, or even before—so weak souls perish in the crisis of death, or even before. IMMORTALITY IS FOR THOSE ONLY WHO ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO GRASP IT!"

"Incarnate fiend! Have you chosen this holy ground to deliver your diabolical heresies only, or have you any other purpose? If so, speak it, for my soul is scorched by your presence, as my body would be by the proximity of a conflagration!"

"Go on, sir. My father, who was expert at gambling, used to say that it was the privilege of the beaten to swear."

"Will you tell me why you seek me in this secret way?"

"Truth, father, I love to prolong this conversation. It

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is so seldom I find one with whom I can be *really* frank as I can with you; it is quite refreshing."

The fingers of the priest worked convulsively; his sunken eyes flashed for an instant, and then fell: a power as of myriads of angels had sought to draw him away—a power as of hosts of demons held him to his seat. The hour and the place—deep, dark night, the interior of the lone old church—the presence of this evil spirit, scarcely less terrible to him than if disembodied, all acted upon his shattered nerves and held him in a state of hopeless imbecility, fitfully varied by spasms of resistance, each of which left him weaker than before. At last he said, in a smothered voice:

"Girl, thou knowest my secret—by what necromancy, it is bootless to ask—but thou knowest my secret. What is the price of thy silence?"

"Ah, *now* thou comest to the point. In a word, then, Edgar Ardenne called upon you last week with a request that you would unite himself and Miss Darling in marriage, and you refused to do so."

"I did. I will not officiate in a clandestine marriage. I wonder that any minister of the Gospel ever should."

"Exemplary old man! Would you have the young people elope *without* being married? for that would be the end of your morality."

"I would have all ministers of the Gospel and all others do their simple duty, and leave the consequences——"

"I might prove that those very 'consequences' affect the very point of 'duty,' but I will not. I will only remark that I wish you to reconsider that decision. I wish you to pronounce the nuptial benediction that shall unite forever the destinies of Edgar Ardenne and Winny Darling, and at no later period than to-morrow evening."

"Ha! Now do you not know, Miss Hinton, that such

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a ceremony would be null and void, that both Ardenne and Miss Darling are under age, and that in Virginia the marriage of minors, without the consent of their parents and guardians, is illegal, invalid?"

"Full well I know *that;* but I know also that as England has its Gretna Green, so Virginia has its Harper's Ferry, and that this law of Virginia does not diminish the annual number of youthful marriages. I know that its only effect is to take from the treasury of the State of Virginia, and to throw into the treasury of the State of Maryland, several thousand dollars annually, in the money paid for marriage licenses by citizens of Virginia to the clerks of the county courts of Maryland. So much for their imported English law! Now, what I want you to do, Father Burleigh, is *this*—Edgar Ardenne and Winny Darling will be at Harper's Ferry to-morrow evening; meet them there, cross the Potomac with them, unite them in the State of Maryland."

"And the license then?"

"No difficulty will be met there. The host of the hotel at Harper's Ferry 'keeps constantly on hand a supply' of blank licenses from the Court of Hagerstown, 'which he will sell at a small advance,'" laughed Sina.

The face of the priest could not be seen; the light he held was flickering out; he did not speak in reply to what she last said.

"And, father, *notice, listen*—for now comes the very point of my argument. *My own participation in this affair must not be known.* No, not to one single soul; for, father, *the day that I lose favor in this neighborhood, that very day your secret is given to the winds!*"

The light flashed up in an expiring flare, illuminating the thin, fierce features and piercing eyes of the fiendish girl, and then went out in darkness.

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CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT OF THE LOVE-ANGEL.

I leave thee, father! Eve's bright moon
Must now light other feet,
With the gathered grapes and the harp in tune,
Thy homeward steps to greet.
Thou in whose voice to bless thy child,
Lay tones of love so deep,
Whose eye o'er all my youth hath smiled,
I leave thee!—Let me weep!

Mother, I leave thee!—on thy breast,
Pouring out joy and woe,
I have found that holy place of rest,
Still changeless—yet I go!
Lips that have lulled me with your strain,
Eyes that have watched my sleep!
Will earth give love like yours again,
Dear mother?—Let me weep!—*Mrs. Hemans.*

Oak Grove lay hushed and basking in the noon of an August day, the silence only dreamily disturbed by the drowsy murmur of the breeze among the foliage. Dinner was over, and the squire, clad in a cool white linen jacket and trowsers, was lying at length upon the long bench of the front piazza, taking his siesta. The county paper, with which he had read himself to sleep, had dropped from his hand. A drowsy little black boy, in his shirt sleeves, was keeping the flies off his master, with a bunch of long peacock feathers. It is a warm, heavy, sleepy season, and the little negro nods and bobs, and sways the peacock feathers. Presently he will inevitably slap it into the face of his master, who will wake up swearing.

In another part of the house, Madame Winnifred, in her own chamber, knelt at her mid-day devotions.

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In still another chamber, sat Winny and Sina. They sat by a window that was closely shaded with green foliage, the favorite resort of singing birds, which the gentleness of Winny had never alarmed. And through these green branches were caught short views of the level lawn, dotted with huge oak trees, and a glimpse of the distant Quarters. Winny leaned upon her right elbow, and gazed tearfully from this embowered window. Her other hand was held by Sina, who pressed and kissed it frequently, or stroked her golden ringlets, and spoke to her tenderly and soothingly.

"But Sina—dear Sina—this is the *last*, the *very last* day that I shall stay at home; and it is *half over*. And to think that I am deceiving my trusting father and my dear, dear grandmother! that I, whom they love so fondly, so much more than I deserve—I, whom they call their 'darling,' their 'blessing,' their 'love-angel,' should deceive and desert them. Oh, it is very, very wicked."

"Well, my love, if you think so, abandon the project—and if Ardenne, in his disappointment and despair, should blow his brains out—"

Winny turned pale, and shuddered from head to foot

"Should blow his brains out, as young Fisher did, when Mary Key Dorsey jilted him last month, I do not *know*, I am not *sure*, that the sin will be laid at your door. You would be quite the *innocent* cause of his suicide."

Winny was scarcely sixteen—a mere child—a country child—a home-educated child—without the slightest protective knowledge of the world—without the slightest suspicion of its falsehood. Blame her filial impiety as it deserves—as she blames it herself, but do not call her weak, or foolish in her credulity of Sina's representations. She was not naturally weak or foolish, as her brave and patient after-life proved—no, she was only immature, sensitive, confiding.

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"You do not dread this, I know; catastrophes are always unexpected, but—"

"Oh! say no more. I shall not recede now. I have no power to turn back now. I am whirled rapidly onward by a current I cannot arrest. Cannot, because I will not. Inclination hurries me forward—only duty, conscience, the memory of all the wrong I do those whom I love and leave, would stop me—but cannot; only troubles me. But I will not be traitor to my own conscience; I will not say that it exonerates, when it bitterly accuses me. I will not say that I think I am doing right, when I know and feel that I am doing wrong, wrong, wrong—oh, so *very* wrong. I may have sinned before, but certainly I never suffered from remorse before."

"My dear love, my sweet Winny, my angel, do not talk so. *Remorse*—for what? You talk as though you were about to commit some atrocious wickedness. You are going to be married, and marriage is a holy state."

"Yes, marriage *is* a holy state. I *feel* that—oh, so deeply, so strongly, so profoundly now. But I feel, too, that in entering this holy state against my dear grandmother, my more than mother's wishes—without my father's blessing, and in defiance of his curse, that I desecrate a sanctuary—that I commit a sacrilege, even as much as though I seized with impious hands, and quaffed with unholy lips, the sacred cup of the Eucharist!"

"Winny, Winny, my little love, do not talk so. You are *already* married. By the mutual attractions God has placed in your hearts, he has already married you. You do but legalize on earth what God has done in Heaven."

"That is true; and yet—and yet—there is a disturbance—a discord in my soul—a bright joy struggling with a dark trouble—as if I had stolen as a thief into Heaven, with the sins of earth all clinging around me."

For the first time, Sina Hinton lost her self-command;

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in truth, for a week she had had "a job" in the several parts she had played with Winny, with Ardenne, with the squire and the priest, and her patience was about exhausted —she jumped up and walked the floor in hasty strides, exclaiming:

"In the name of Judas, then, send word to Edgar to go about his business, and so drop the whole matter."

Winny held out her hand.

"Be patient with me, Sina, dear Sina—you who have nothing to reproach yourself with—you do not understand my feelings, even as I who never experienced physical pain, am puzzled to know why the sick should groan and writhe so. Be patient, Sina. Come back to me. I *told* you I would go—I *will* go. But come, Sina, there are some things I wish to leave with you to do."

Miss Hinton came and sat again by her side, embraced her, and said:

"Forgive me, Winny—but, my dear child, your morbid sensibility *does* try my patience, sadly—and what is the use of it? You compared your course just now to the whirl of a current of destiny."

"No—not of *destiny*—I did not *so* excuse myself—to a current of *inclination.*"

"It is the same thing. Let me remind you now of our boating on the Shenandoah. You and Ardenne were in a skiff together—we had many, many miles of smooth water from Harper's Ferry up to Shannondale, there we got into the rapids, and for a few minutes, during which we crossed them, our situation seemed—it was *only* seeming—very perilous. You held your very breath for awe—yet in less than an hour we were in smooth water again, and continued our course gleefully. *You are now in the rapids of your life*, and your grief and remorse are now as gratuitous and as temporary as your awe and terror were then. Oh, nonsense, my love. You will *smile* at this to-morrow—to-

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morrow, when in the saloon of Oak Grove, Mrs. Ardenne, resting upon her husband's arm, with her father by her side, will be receiving the congratulatory visits of her friends. Nay, you will *wonder* at these fears, when in a few weeks, or months, Mrs. Ardenne shall see her husband, assisted by her father's great influence, rise rapidly to that high political distinction for which his splendid talents so eminently fit him. Why, Winny! *why, Winny!*" exclaimed Sina, suddenly changing her tone to one of light joyousness—"think of the great, the *immense* good your hand will confer upon Ardenne, and cast off your fears. As a general thing, *I* disapprove of clandestine marriages, especially as they are often contracted hastily between thoughtless girls and reckless young men—whose very levity have made them unacceptable to the parents—and urge them into a secret union; but your case and that of Ardenne is so widely different, so diametrically opposite. It is a proud thing for you to open to one so eminently endowed as Ardenne, the way for a splendid political career. Do you not know, girl, that your lover's intellect is magnificent? that he will blaze forth upon the world, with the blinding light of a newly created sun?" said the artful and eloquent girl, appealing to the loving enthusiasm of Winny.

"Oh, I know, I know it," said the child, clasping her hands fervently together, while her cheek burned and her eye glowed; "I know that he is a radiant archangel on earth."

Sina turned aside to hide the mocking smile that taunted secretly the ecstatic admiration of the poor love-stricken child. She was content, that she had drawn her for a moment from her sad reveries. *It was but for a moment.* Winny's thoughts turned with an inevitable tendency to the sorrowful, to the TRUE aspect of her position. She rose up and dried her eyes, and went about her little preparations, pale and sorrowful as though they were for a

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funeral—not a wedding—and all these preparations were for the comfort of those she was about to leave behind—just as the dying set their house in order before their departure.

"Here, Sina, here is a set of rubies—my father's gift upon my last birthday—they will look well in your dark hair, Sina; take and wear them for my sake."

"But, my love—these are very—very costly—a—a *fortune* in themselves," said the cunning girl, divided between avarice and fear.

"Are they? I did not know it; so much the better for you, if they are valuable."

"But, my love, this munificent—regal present—your father might not approve."

"My father—my father—oh! whatever my father *does* care for, he does *not* care for the cost, or money—especially he will not now when he is about to lose—oh, pitying Saviour—here, take them, Sina, and say no more about them, for my heart is *very* heavy."

"But, my love, you may want them yourself."

"No, I do not like jewels about my person—they are heavy and sharp and flashing—and I almost *dis*like them; they offend my every sense—they flash my eyes out. I like softness and repose too well to like jewels—so be at ease, dear Sina, and enjoy the rubies, for you, I know, like jewels."

"Oh, I do! I do so!"

"And here, Sina; here is a piece of crimson satin, grandmother bought me for a dress—it will become your dark style well; take it."

"But, my love, *this* at least you will want."

"No," said Winny, in a tone whose sad solemnity would have touched any heart but Sina's; "no—if my father forgives me, I shall be too happy to need any thing; if he does not, I shall be too lost to think of any thing—*like that.*"

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"My love, your fears are entirely groundless, and if they were *not*—if the squire *should* be obdurate for a while—why it will be his own fault, and I should give myself no concern about it."

"Ah! but there is one, poor one, who will be utterly blameless and helpless in the matter, and who will suffer more than all; for she will have no support in resentment, as my father will—no solace in love, as I shall. My poor, unselfish, fond grandmother. Oh, it is cruel, it is wicked, to grieve the love of *old age*. Youth is elastic and hopeful, with a long future before it, and can get over every trouble except, perhaps, *remorse;* and middle life is mature in strength, and occupied with many things; but age, old age, it has so little to hope for in this world, so short a time to live in this sunshiny world, that it loves as much as a child does; and to fill that little time with bitterness—to flood those few remaining hours with sorrow; to break an *old* heart that has survived all the stormy troubles of life, to be broken at last by its best loved; and yet I am going to risk *that*, perhaps to do that. Oh, Sina! they call me 'a good child,' and 'a dear child,' when, if they *knew* it, I am only a selfish deceiver. Oh, Sina! there is not in all the prison cells of all the world, a heart designing so much wickedness as mine; for there is not one planning to break a gray-haired mother's gentle, loving heart. Oh, Sina! how can *you* love me; how can you *bear* to look upon me, knowing all my illness as you do." And so, bitterly reproaching herself, she burst into a tempest of tears, fell upon the bosom of Sina, and sobbed with a passionate vehemence that shook her fragile form as the storm shakes the rose-tree. *That* passion passed also, and then, *indeed*, she grew calm and progressed with her little preparations. All, as I said, for those she left behind—none for herself, or her journey. "This little pile of clothes is for Aunt Nerve and her children; and this roll of old linen is for

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old Aunt Maul—you know she is the sick nurse of the Quarters; and, Sina, while I think of it—let me beg you, do not neglect the poor old people, whose infirmities confine them to their cabins. Send them something from the table every meal; and gather them together every evening under the oak tree, and read a chapter in the Bible to them, as *I* used to do; and do not let *any one* miss me, if you can help it. And, oh, Sina! above all things, supply my place to my poor father, and my poor, dear grandmother; do not let them lack any of the little services they have been accustomed to receive from me."

And oh! there was such a depth of mournfulness in her tones, there was such a world of sorrowful love in her meek, blue eyes! nay, her bright gold ringlets hung out of curl, and pale and dim and damp with the shower of tears she had shed. It was clear that, however she might try to hope, to believe, in every tone of her melodious voice—melodious with the liquid music of still-gathering and unshed tears—every word of her conversation, was betrayed the gradual lowering of a heavy cloud, a dark presentiment upon her spirit, a conviction that her parting with her family must be long or final. All that afternoon she occupied herself with minute detailed cares for the convenience of those she abandoned. At sunset all her preparations were complete, and yet she had not even put up a little bundle or a change of clothing for herself. And then, knowing that her grandmother was at her evening devotions, and her father was taking his evening ride of supervision over his plantation, the next religious feeling to filial piety, love and reverence for her native home and scenes, found expression in the last, long, impassioned, venerating gaze she fixed upon the sun going down behind the magnificent trees, and striking long lines of golden light between their massive dark trunks across the lawn. Her tears again fell like rain. She had shed so many tears! Were their fountains eter-

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nal, that they should fall again? Oh, Winny! child of love and prayer, was there no self-preserving power within thy soul to save thee from the impending storm of sorrow, the shadow of whose approach has darkened all thy spirit? Where are thy angels, Winny, that they do not snatch thee away? Where is thy mother, child, that she does not interpose to save? Is *she*, is *love* less powerful in Heaven than on earth? Ah, no; it is only *wiser* and more *patient*. Her far-piercing eye, soaring up the heights of time, sees, through all thy present weakness and coming sorrow, the steps to thy future glorious strength and gladness.

At early candle-light the family, four in number now—the squire, the old lady, and the two girls—assembled around the tea-table. Winny could not talk, could not eat, and she was too guileless to be able to affect an ease and cheerfulness far from her heart.

"My dear baby, what ails you?" asked her grandmother, looking mildly at her.

Winny did not reply; it took all her strength to suppress her tears.

"Oh!" said the squire, who was not celebrated for penetration, "oh, the thoughts of to-morrow's pleasure has taken the child's appetite away. You know that she has been invited to a breakfast and shooting party, to be held at the seat of Colonel Dangerfield, and she is to set out to-morrow morning at daybreak."

"At daybreak! It is too early for her, poor thing! to ride without her breakfast, too; and how is she going, and who is going with her?"

"She will ride Seafoam, and old Kill will attend her."

"And no female companion?"

"Miss Sina has not been invited."

"No," said Sina, "Colonel Dangerfield is more of an aristocrat than a gentleman; he has overlooked a salaried companion. But no matter," added she, mentally "though

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this omission suits me very well *now*, I shall nevertheless remember it against you and repay it with *interest*, Colonel Lee Dangerfield. I do not suffer the world to remain long in my debt."

The party arose from the table. It was the custom of the regular household to retire early, and soon after they were about to separate for the night.

"Good-night, Winny, love," said the squire, folding his child to his bosom. "Good-night, darling. I shan't be up early enough to see you off; but take care of yourself, my dear baby, and come home early in the evening, do you hear?"

Winny was fearfully pale. Happily, in the dim taper's light, he did not see it.

"Will you not *bless* me, my father?" she asked, in a tremulous voice."

"To be sure I will, my love, my angel child," said the father, with a deep-toned tenderness and swimming eyes; for something in her manner—or was it a vague presentiment of his own!—touched and melted his parent-heart. "To be sure I will, my love, my angel child. God bless thee, Winny! God, in the might of his power and the richness of his love, bless thee; bless thee, my love child, *even as thou shalt bless thy father!*"

A wild, half-smothered scream sprang from Winny's surcharged heart; her overwrought nerves failed, and she fell, half fainting, upon her father's arm. All was dismay. All hurried to the drooping girl.

"Give her to me! give her to me!" suddenly, spasmodically exclaimed Sina Hinton, catching the form of Winny with an air of authority, and bearing her off to her room.

"What is the meaning of all that?" exclaimed the terrified and bewildered squire.

"Sina knows, Sina knows; it is hysterical only; gentlemen do not know any thing. Sina knows; there is no occasion for the least alarm; I am going to her now," said

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the old lady, in order to reassure her son, and then she slowly tottered out of the room and up the stairs. In a very few minutes she came down again, smiling with pleasure and benevolence, and saying:

"There, dear, I knew that it was all nothing. Miss Hinton, to save me fatigue, met me at the head of the stairs and told me that it was—now the merest trifle you can conceive of—a *needle* the poor, dear, careless baby had stuck in the bosom of her dress, and when you pressed her the point ran into her shoulder, and the sudden pang and fright made the poor, nervous child scream and almost faint. Miss Hinton says that she is now smiling at the affair, and that she will be in my room, as usual, to-night."

"Humph! I wish Winny wouldn't stick needles in her bosom and daggers in mine at the same time. Tell her so," grumbled and laughed the squire, as he rolled his portly figure off to his room.

Madame Winifred went to her own chamber, where her old servant already waited to assist her at her night toilet. Soon Winny came in, as was her invariable custom. The room was scarcely lighted by a very dim night-taper, and the old lady could not see how dreadfully pale and haggard her child was.

"Dear grandmother, send Nerve away and let me wait on you to-night, will you not!"

"*You*, my dear baby! No, you are not strong enough after your fright."

"Dear grandmother, I am. *Do* gratify me in this, will you not?"

Though she did not see her face, there was something so deep, so mournful, in the low tones of her voice, that Madame Winifred at once dismisssed her attendant, and suffered the child to have her way.

The old lady sat in a low-backed easy-chair, while Winny removed her cap, and, laying it carefully away stood be-

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hind her and began to comb out her long, soft, waving, half-curling, silver hair, with its few stray tresses of still beautiful auburn. Even Winny remembered when that fine fall of hair was of a richer golden hue than her own bright locks. Yet Winny still admired the rolling torrent of silver hair, and said that it was *still* beautiful, *still* radiant, and *brightening for Heaven*. But now, to-night, it seemed to her only white, pale, and *fading for the grave*. She rolled it up with reverend hands and concealed it all under the clean white linen cap, around which she bound a black silk fillet. Then she tenderly unpinned and removed each article of the old lady's dress, carefully laying it away. At last, when her grandmother was in bed, Winny knelt down by the bedside and took her hand to kiss. A superstitious awe—a feeling of dire fatality—overpowered her, and she did not dare to ask her blessing. The old lady put out her other thin and wasted hand, and stroking her "baby's" fair, soft hair, she said:

"Winny, my precious child, you are not cheerful. What ails you, my own darling? What *should* trouble your young life? What *does*? Tell me, Winny. Darling of my old age, tell me."

"Alas, alas, grandmother!" exclaimed Winny, dropping her head upon the coverlet and weeping bitterly.

"Oh, it *is* something! It *is* not, as I had almost hoped, a mere notion of mine. It is something! Winny, my dear, dear child, nothing troubles you that will not trouble me more. Lay your little griefs upon my bosom, my bright-haired darling; or, if they are indeed serious sorrows, repose them here, Winny; or even—were that possible—if you have committed a *fault*, relieve yourself—lay it *here*, Winny, without distrust, without fear, for you will find nothing but mercy and love here, my heart's own dear child."

But Winny sobbed as if *her* heart would break.

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"Will you not tell me, my own child?"

"Not to-night!—oh, not to-night!—to-morrow, perhaps, if—if I—if I re—," but Winny's voice was lost in choking sobs.

"Well, then, not to-night, my baby; I will not distress you now." And the old lady stopped talking, and, with a delicate and tender sympathy, only stroked her golden hair, or silently pressed her little hands, and looked lovingly upon her, while she sobbed herself into a sort of quiet, kneeling by the bedside with her head upon the coverlet.

The old old lady partly guessed the cause of her sorrow, but not the *whole* cause. She suspected her *love* for Edgar Ardenne, but dreamed of nothing *beyond.*

At last Winny, not wishing to keep her grandmother longer from her rest, and resolving to come in and take a farewell look at her while sleeping, arose, and kissing the old lady's wrinkled brow, murmured:

"Good-night, grandmother; I am better now. Good-night, sweet grandmother!" and was stealing away from the bedside when the feeble tones of the old lady recalled her.

"Come back, my child—my angel child. I cannot somehow part with you so to-night. Come back."

Winny returned and kneeled again at the bedside, looking like some beautiful, fragile penitent, with her fair locks flowing down over her white dress, her wan face and blue eyes turned wistfully, pleadingly up to the face of her aged parent.

The aged woman stretched forth her withered arms and laid her venerable hands in benediction upon that young, fair head. Why did the fragile form shudder through every limb at the touch, as though it feared a malediction? No word could come from those aged and saintly lips that could be tortured into anathema. No! As the old woman laid her reverend palms upon the young and sin-bowed head, she looked upon it with such a world, such a *Heaven* of for-

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giveness, of mercy, of love, and of blesssing; and she murmured, solemnly:

"May the Father of all mercy—our heavenly Father—*bless* thee, my child! May he forgive all thy sins, strengthen all thy weaknesses, sanctify all thy sorrows, and turn all thy evils into good! May the Father of love, in the richness and fullness of his love, bless thee forever and ever, oh, our child. And even as a Divine Being *can* bless infinitely more than a human being can, so may the Almighty and All-merciful bless thee *infinitely* more than thou hast blessed and shalt bless us—oh, our angel-child!"

How beautiful, how radiant, how divine looked that aged face, with the soul of love and mercy glowing through it!

"Oh, lovely—oh, benign—oh, heavenly lips, my mother! —oh, undefiled, celestial lips, that spoke that priceless blessing—that blessing without alloy, that my soul thirsted for, even unto death! Oh, seraph spirit! love-spirit! before you take flight for your native Heaven, you will know how inestimable, how priceless that blessing is to me!" exclaimed Winny, beside herself with overwrought excitement, as she passionately embraced her aged parent, covering her hands with hot tears and kisses.

"Calm thee, my child—calm thee, Winny—there—there —you are hysterical; go seek your pillow, my love—go, Winny; God love thee! there—go."

And folding the child down tenderly to her bosom, kissing her closely on the lips, she dismissed her to her chamber.

Winny reached her room, where Sina, moody and out of patience, awaited her coming. Sina was so fatigued with acting, and her projects were so nearly accomplished, as far as Winny was concerned, that she felt disposed to relax her efforts, and refresh herself with a little of her natural ill-temper; so she said to Winny, as she entered:

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"Really, I do think that Edgar Ardenne should feel particularly flattered by the cheerfulness with which you prepare to give him your hand."

Winny did not reply to, or even hear this sharp speech. She undressed and went to bed at once. She could not sleep. In an hour she left her bed and crept softly to the door of her father's chamber. It was locked on the inside; and, with a murmured prayer and a deep sigh, she left it. Then she softly, very softly, re-entered her grandmother's room. The dim night-taper was still burning on the hearth —and it might have been the unnatural reflection of the light coming from below—but certainly, as she approached the sleeper, she started with a quick heart-spasm at what at first seemed to her to be a sudden and fearful change in the countenance of her aged parent. Never had that face appeared so old—so *very* aged—so pallid, sunken, and pinched—so *corpse*-like. Winny suppressed a deep groan as she knelt by that bedside. Clasping her hands together under her bowed head, down which, on either side, streamed the long, pale hair, and straining her anguished eyes upon the sleeper's face, as though she would pierce the mask of slumber and read the heart behind—there, in bitterness of spirit, in silent tears and smothered groans, and fruitless attempts at prayer, she passed the night. Two or three times the old lady had sighed profoundly, and moved; but Winny would quickly drop to the ground, to avoid being seen, until the stillness assured her that her grandmother slumbered again.

At day-break, Sina Hinton softly entered the room, and, coming to the side of Winny, said:

"How long have you been up?"

"All night—did not you know it?"

"No, indeed. I saw you in bed, put out the candle, and as soon as I touched my pillow I was fast asleep. I have but just awakened, and, missing you, supposed that you had arisen and come in here, according to custom."

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'You slept! Ah, *you* have nothing on your conscience to keep sleep away!"

"No, thank Heaven!" said Sina.

Winny then arose, and fixing one long, last agonized look upon her aged parent, she put her arms in that of Sina, and hurried away. It was now but four o'clock. Sina hastened her toilet. Miss Hinton had a reason for hurrying Winny off an hour earlier than the one fixed. She had heard, as Winny had *not*, the squire give orders, the evening previous, for coffee to be ready for Miss Darling at five o'clock that morning; and she had heard Madam Winifred give directions to her maid to wake her up at half-past four, so that she might see her child comfortably off. Now, Sina knew that Winny chanced to be ignorant of all this; and, being thoroughly sick and tired of Winny and her weakness, she determined to get her off before any of the family should be up. She did not risk giving offense, or exciting suspicion by this course, because she herself had received no direction to the contrary. As for old Uncle Kill, *he* was ignorant of every thing relating to the subject, beyond the orders he had received from Miss Hinton to have the horses ready at the door by four o'clock in the morning.

So punctual was Miss Hinton, that, as the clock struck the appointed hour, she led out Winny, arrayed in her graceful blue riding-habit, with a little straw hat with blue ribbons shading her snowy forehead and long golden ringlets. They formed a beautiful picture—the fay-like maiden, with her azure-hued and flowing robe, and pale gold floating hair upon the shining white pony, with his long, soft silvery mane and tail.

She had just turned her horse's head to go, when a slight noise at an upper window drew her attention, and looking up she saw her grandmother's head at the window—saw her indistinctly—in the white night-cap, with the black band-

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age against the dark background of the open window, leaning on the sill, with one withered hand held up above her eyes, trying to catch a last glimpse of her departing darling —or perhaps to recall her. As Winny looked up, a strong, powerful, most potent, almost irresistible attraction, drew her—would have forced her back to her home—back to her grandmother's bosom, for she instinctively threw up both her arms to the window to meet the arms instinctively held down to her; but Sina Hinton, perceiving her vacillation, quietly put her hand to the bridle bit. It was a little thing, a scarcely perceptible motion, but it turned the pony's head —it turned the vibrating scale of destiny. Winny dropped her arms and went on.

Very lovely she looked, with her long, fair hair and azure robe, her pearl-white pony's silvery mane and tail, all flowing, floating, waving in the early morning breeze—a soft, bright, cloudlike, foamlike, evanescent image of exceeding beauty, as she vanished through the great front gate.

Whether it was because a young heart cannot long dwell upon sorrowful images left behind, or from the natural reaction of so much depression, or the revivifying influence of early morning and awakening Nature, or the speedy certainty of meeting her lover, or the effect of all these causes together—as was most likely—Winny's spirits rose from the moment of her leaving the gate. She turned into a narrow bridle-path, leading through an angle of the dense forest to the banks of the river. She reached the borders of the beautiful Shenandoah, the river of "Rays and Shadows," just as the Eastern sky was flushing up rosy red above the intense blue of the Ridge. The old ferryman was waiting to take them over. Their road upon the other side lay for many miles upon the banks of the Shenandoah. And a wild and most beautiful path it was; with the Blue Ridge towering on the right, and the Shenandoah flowing on the left, with a distance of only a few yards between

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them. Down the sides of the mountain, even to the river's flood, grew the dark, dense forest, shading the narrow road, and the branches of whose trees, when lofty, met overhead, when lower, interlaced so thickly as to be almost impassable. Though the lofty plumes of trees that nodded over the brow of the river on the left might be seen across the flood, the rolling green hills, the shaded dells, the woods, and fields, and streams, and homesteads of the beautiful valley—"the garden spot of the world"—where, but to stand and receive it, it seems as though the heart must break with the pouring in, from all points, of the beauty and blessing, the glory and the gladness of Nature, the exultant life and joy of the young morn!

And now the sun is rising; and, at the first godlike glance striking long lines of fluid silver athwart the mountain, all the green hills of the valley smiled out broad and bright to greet him in reflected light—responsive love!—while the trees, waving in the wind, tossed their mighty branches, throwing off their tribute of liquid diamonds—sparkling dew-drops! And now the god has risen; and, as the glorious canopy of golden clouds rolls up above his head, he deluges the whole earth and sky with a flood of insufferable light.

The *sounds* of morning—of morning in the country—of morning in the wilderness—of Nature awakening! First those undescribed and undescribable notes of awakening life—"unwritten music"—coming we know not whence—what are they? The motion of trees, as they rouse themselves from sleep?—the merry wakening of plants?—the laugh of the rills gushing into new life?—the songs of streams in unison? Whence comes it, this concert of morning music, deep-toned, yet clear, and echoing and resounding far and wide, and filling all the air with melody?—this morning hymn of (falsely so-called) inanimate Nature? I think that chanticleer is in the secret, by the joyous, jubi-

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lant, clear resound of his clarion notes through the mountains, woods, and valleys, and the exultant response of his comrades through all the forests, fields, and glens; and I think the birds are in the confidence of the musicians, by the outburst of obstreperous and delirious joy with which they hail the morn; and I think the flowers are of the same party, by the way they open their eyes and smile, offering, with the grand diapason of harmonious Nature, the *silent music of their perfume.*

But we, the Lords and Ladies of Creation, we have so much more knowledge than wisdom, we are too learned to know any thing about it, too high (Heaven help the altitude!), in the scale of creation, to *care* any thing about it, until we are bruised and beaten down, or grow dizzy and fall down, and then we are willing to learn of Nature, and to know what Father Sun and Mother Earth possess to heal and soothe and raise—to teach and bless us with. And those that learn the lesson "ponder these things" in their hearts, lest, revealing them—but ten to one my young readers have skipped, as usual, all this description, and are running their eyes down the column until they find the name of—

Winny. Well, here she is, idly holding her pony's reins, who is pacing through the pleasant umbrageous path, receiving the revivifying influence of Nature into her being, yet unthoughtful of, ungrateful for its ministration,—her heart and brain filled to a painful tension with the fast approaching, the near future, the tremendous crisis in destiny that comes but once in a lifetime. Does *any*—does the lightest, the most frivolous, most unoccupied butterfly of fashion, giving her trifling hand in a marriage of mere convenience, go meet that era in her life with levity? Winny did not certainly. I said her spirits rose, and so they did, but not in levity—rather in exaltation tempered by compunction. And so she rode on through the pleasant forest

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path under the shadow of the Blue Ridge. Her destination, Mount Eyrie, the seat of Colonel Dangerfield, was about ten miles distant from Oak Grove on the road to Harper's Ferry. It was situated on a very elevated site, a cleft in the Blue Ridge, five hundred feet above the river, and with the divided precipices on each side rising still higher several hundred feet. This handsome house had been erected as a hunting-lodge, upon account of the fine deer and other game there. Now it was used by Colonel Dangerfield only as a Summer and early Autumn residence. Here, during all the Summer months, he was accustomed to entertain company, ladies as well as gentlemen. Here, rather early, that is, near the first of September, the deer-hunting commenced. And this was the first sporting party of the season. A breakfast was given, to which all the neighboring gentry were invited, and to this Winny had been bidden. Miss Darling was expected to meet her Aunt Summerfield and family there, and to remain under her chaperonage during the visit. But Winny looked for another there, as the reader knows. Their road lay still for miles on the forest and mountain-shaded river bank, until they came to The Cleft. Here a steep, winding, perilous path turned off from the river, and led up the side of the mountain to the house. As Winny, closely followed by old Kill, rode up to this turning, and while the old man was gazing, in the last extremity of horror, up to the dizzy height he thought himself shortly doomed to attempt—a horseman emerged from the bushes, met the rushing pony of Winny with a shock, and caught the maiden in his arms. It was Edgar Ardenne.

"My own love!—my blessed Winny!—my seraph, are you well?"

"Very, very well, dear Edgar."

"Heaven bless you for coming. Come, dear, we must on! Twenty miles by the course of the river down which

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we must ride, still lies between us and Harper's Ferry. Come, love!" and Ardenne riding on and keeping hold of her bridle, re-entered the shaded river path, and pursued its course.

Old Kill turned slowly—very slowly around, and gazed after them, with his white eyes gradually enlarging, dilating, and starting out of his head, like one in the act of being bereft of his senses. At last the truth broke on him with terrible effect.

"Hi—what de debil dat mean. Oh! sure 'nough—de Lord! its—its—its—oh! my Lor Gor A'mighty—its *a 'lopement!* Hullo! Miss Winny! Marse Edgar! *that's* pretty behavement! Stop!—wo—hie!—wo-o-o—oh! Miss Winny! Marse Edgar! Oh! for de Lor' Gor A'mighty's sake, *stop!* Hullo!—murder!—help!—fire!—thieves!—get *along*, Chally! (*Charles*—his old white horse.) Hooweep-whip!—get *along*, Chally! *Murder!* I say—fire!—thieves! Git *along*, Chally! Oh, my Gor A'mighty—they done gone *clean* out o' sight, a flyin'! an' this cussed infunnelly ole Chally *won't* git *along!*" exclaimed the poor old body-guard, urging with whip and spur, and frantic jerks at the bit, his horse to its utmost speed—and finally dropping into a despairing attitude as he muttered—"Well! fore de Lor! ef *ever* I see de like!—dis nigger better go sell hisself to Georgy at oncet, fore ever he go back to Oak Oak Grove wid dis news. And dat am a sure sign he has to do it. Come, Chally! you an' me got to turn right roun' an' go back, an' face ole master now! and sure as ever he storms out, an' cusses me, I'll storm out, an' cuss *you*, for ef it hadn't a bin for *you*,—you forsook ole sinner you!—I should a cotch up to um!" and turning, old Kill slowly rode back to Oak Grove, and meeting the squire in the hall, fired the mine, whose explosion was fraught with such disastrous consequences to all concerned.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSEHOLD WRECK.

Senseless and deformed,
Convulsive anger storms at large, or pale,
And silent settles into fell revenge.—*Thomson.*

"Oh, Miss Harry, chile, don't ask me, don't! Sam* done tuk the whole 'trol o' this house in his own han'. I never seen such a 'stressed fam'ly in *all* my life. Poor Miss Winny! poor dear baby! done made a darned etarnal fool o' herself, and runned away with a poor white man who ain't no sort o' 'count in this worl'—don't so much as own a single patch o' land on the yeth!† and ain't got a blessed nigger to hand the chile a drink o' water!—poor chile!—poor, dear, foolish baby! see what she's fotch herself to! To go an' heave herself away on a poor white man! Oh, my blessed Hebenly Marser, that eber I should lib to see the day as Winny Darlin' 'ould go and fetch a 'sgrace on top o' wedem,‡ by takin' up long o' a poor white herrin' as ain't got so much as a single nigger to walk arter her an' pick up her pocket hand'cher. Poor, dear lamb!—poor, dear baby! the darned, etarnal little fool! she ought to be turned up and switched 'fore ever she thinked o' gittin' a husban', more less 'gracin' wedem by a-heavin' o' herself away on a poor white fish whose great-great-great-grand-daddy was overseer to hern. Oh, my blessed 'Deemer! that ever I should lib to see such a 'grace fotch on wedem, de werry first fam'ly in Virginny! an' by that

* Satan. † Earth. ‡ Us all.

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chile, too, as I have nussed at my own breas' an' fotch up in de fear ob de debil, teached her duty every night duly as the night come afore I put her to bed; yes, an' loved her much as if I had fotched her in the worl' myself! Yes, an' I love her *still*, poor little tender, lovin' lamb!—the cussed infernally little huzzy! an' ef it warn't for a-leavin' of ole Madam, an' a-'gracin' ourselves still more by runnin' away, me an' ole Kill 'ould follow arter her and stay 'long o' her, to take care o' her, 'cause, you see, Miss Harry, nater's nater, an' arter all, she's our chile, an' our nusslin', ef she *has* hev herself away on a feller whose great-great-great-grand-daddy was overseer to hern!"

Such, between tears, sobs, pious ejaculations, difficult to distinguish from oaths, praises, reproaches and conscience-crippled curses, was the oration delivered by old Nerve in reply to Miss Harriette Joy's inquiries upon the morning of Winny's elopement. Harry having heard that the whole neighborhood had (metaphorically) flown to arms at the report of some catastrophe at Oak Grove, had jumped on her horse and ridden over to Oak Grove to know the truth. She was now sitting still in her saddle at the great front gate where Nerve had chanced to meet her.

Nerve having finished her speech, or being overcome by her feelings, dropped down upon the grassy bank and sobbed aloud.

"Oh come, don't cry so! Be comforted, aunty; take heart! the alliance of Edgar Ardenne is an honor to any family. He is one of Nature's princes!"

"He's *what?*"

"He is singularly handsome in person, noble in manner, highly accomplished, eminently endowed with talent—"

"Oh, de debil!"

"Backed by the influence of his father-in-law, he may rise to the proudest distinction?"

"The *what you call it?*"

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"He may, for aught you know to the contrary, one day be President of the United States?" laughed Harry.

"Oh, pres'den' of de new knighted debels! Sposen ef he *was* pres'den' of de new-righted States? *that* ain't a goin' to take the 'grace off a top o' wedem! *that* ain't a goin' to 'vent *his* great-great-great-grand-daddy from bein' overseer to *hern*." I don't see no sort o' help for it on this yeth! Lord-a-massy, upon top of us!"

This was said in a tone of deep despair, with something between a convulsive sob and a profound sigh.

"But the squire! tell me about the squire—what did he say?"

"Don't ask me, Miss Harry! please don't—I wants to settle my min', and to keep it away from dwellin' on Sam's doin's ef I poss'l'y can! cause you see, Miss Harry, it ain't no sort o' 'cessity for me to lose my 'mortal soul, 'long o' ole marser an' his deblish doin's! for Sam's in him big as a house!"

"But, oh! Nerve, *do* tell me; for I am *really* concerned to know. Is there any likelihood of the squire forgiving them?"

"*He* 'give them! Lord-a-massy upon top o' *you*, Miss Harry! not to know old marster better 'an that! Long ago he done take Sam to live long o' him night *an'* day! he eats and sleeps long o' him. *He* 'give them—yes! he'll give 'em an ague ef he catches of 'em!"

"Was he so highly incensed then?"

"Lord, child! *no*—he warn't *in sensed* at all! he goed ravin', 'stracted *mad!* He raved and tored and bellowed worse 'an a run-mad bull! as ef he was a-goin' to tear the floor up, an' split the ruff off the top o' the house! He cussed and swored an' blasphemed 'till—oh! my hebenly Jesus! I 'spected ebery minute for a yethquake to open an swallow up the whole plaatation; an' I 'clare to my hebenly 'Deemer, my blood didn't turn cold as ice, an' my

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hair straightened right up; I feel a cole chill—like a cole night-cap all over my head! True as I tell you. Then he began to cuss Miss Winny, and put bad wishes on her; an' oh! Mother of Jesus! you neber heer such wishes as that deblish ole sinner heaped on top o' his own dear chile! I coulden' stand that no how you *could* fix it! cause, you see, nater's nater—an' Sam ain't got so far 'head o' me yet as to make me forget the baby, as I nussed at my own breas', when her dear mother went home—I thank my hebenly Marster! an' so I runned in, to where he was roarin' an' ravin', an' 'Oh, master,' I says, 'for Jesus' sake,' says I, 'don't, don't—she's your own heart's chile—don't'—but 'fore I could get out another word, the old forsok sinner seized up the heavy brass andiron and hev it at my head! an' ef I hadn't a-dodged and fell down, this precious minute I done be stretch out stiff on the coolin' board for dead!"

"Mercy on us!"

"True as I *tell* you!"

"But her grandmother! the old lady! I feel more concerned for *her*, in her delicate health—how did these horrors affect her?"

"Oh! Miss Harry, it would o' melted a stone to seen ole mist'ess; she never opened her mouth an' said one word agin the chile! 'fore my blessed lovin' Lord, she didn't! When ole marster com'd into the room a rearin' an' roarin' an' tearin' and splitin', an' told her about it—she dropped right down in her chair, all white an' tremblin' an' speechless—and then when he went on a cussin' of Miss Winny—poor baby—she cotch hold o' the arms o' the chair an' helped herself up, tremblin' an' tremblin', an' she stretched out her arms an' tried to speak to make him stop of it; but she choked and couldn't get out a word; and he wouldn't stop; and she turned and looked at me—even at me, her poor ole slave—*so* 'ploring like! and fell back agin into her

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seat, tremblin' an tremblin' like leaves. Then she looked at me agin, without speakin', so helpless—as much as to say, 'Help me up stairs;' and so I went an' guv her my arm, an' half led her, an' half toted her up stairs—such a time I had! two or three times she fell on me with all her weight, though she ain't heavy, nuther."

"But, in the name of Heaven, where was the squire? Why did not her son assist her?"

"Nebber see her!—nebber see her no more nn' nothin' at all! He blind-furious, I tell you! as ever you see a mad dog!—arter he done tell her, he went roarin', an tearin', an' burstin', an breakin', and splittin' all through the house, worse 'an cannon balls an' bumshells! Well, I laid ole mist'ess on the bed, an' she has nebber moved sence, an' nebber spoke sence!"

"Mercy of Heaven! this is paralysis!" exclaimed Harriette, in alarm. Why didn't you tell me of her illness the first thing? Who is with her? Has a doctor been sent for? Where is Squire Darling?" And she jumped from her horse and hurried toward the house, followed by old Nerve, who was terrified half to death by a fact that Harry's words had only just made known to her—

"You—you don't think it is—*that there*? do you, Miss Harry?"

"It is paralysis, I am *sure* of it. Where is Squire Darling?"

"God bless you, honey, he don't know nothin' 'tall about it!—ain't I bin tellin' you as he busted right out o' the house, blind-furious as a mad dog, with two swords—(what was the poor, forsok ole sole goin' to do 'long o' *two* weepons?)—an' sweared how he'd have the heart's blood o' the cowardly traitor, or be slewn himself!"

"Is it possible that he has left the house, and his mother—dying, perhaps!"

They had now reached the house, which was all in confusion.

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"Who is with her?" again asked Harriette, hurrying up the stairs.

"Miss Sina Hinton—an' fore my hebenly 'Deemer, I don't 'prove 'o that young gall."

"Why, what has she done?"

"Don't know—ain't able to fix a single thing on top 'o her, but blessed be my hebenly Jesus, the first time as ever I sot my eye on her, I felt as somethin' evil had come to the house."

This conversation brought them to the door of the aged woman's chamber. Harriette entered softly—the room was silent as death, and so dark that it was some seconds before Harriette could discern the prostrate form of the old lady, extended nearly lifeless on the bed. Sina Hinton sat near the head of the bed, but did not seem to be doing any other duty than watching. Harriette drew near—and after gazing with profound sorrow, reverence and awe upon this forsaken sick bed, she turned, and whispering softly to Sina, inquired if a physician had been summoned, and if Squire Darling had been sent for? What was her surprise and indignation to learn that neither had been done. Miss Hinton had apprehended no danger, she said, and so had taken no precaution. And now Harriette discerned at once the cause of poor old Nerve's previous freedom from alarm upon the subject. And for the first time in her life, she sent a suspicious, searching, angry glance, deep into the eyes of Sina; but those orbs opposed their large, shadowy tenderness, and the fire of Harriette's glance was quenched in the liquid softness of Sina's eyes. Harriette reproached herself for unjust, and even most unreasonable suspicion—for, "what motive," she asked herself, "could Sina have for purposely omitting to use any means for the recovery of the old lady?" Then she hurried out, and sent messengers, post-haste, for a physician, for Squire Darling, and for her uncle, the priest, and then at more leisure, dispatched a

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servant to Shannondale, to inform Mrs. Summerfield of the dangerous illness of her mother.

Evening drew on. The messenger sent for the squire had returned, and declared himself unable to find his master in any of his usual haunts. Mrs. Summerfield, accompanied by Miss Summerfield, and escorted by Colonel Dangerfield, had arrived, and they were waiting in another room the permission of the young priest, who had been called from St. Joseph's in the absence of Father Burleigh, to enter the chamber. The family physician, who had quickly obeyed the hasty summons, had been with her exerting all the powers of his art for her restoration—and all in vain or with but partial success. Late in the evening she recovered her speech in an imperfect degree. "My son—I must see—*my son!*" were the first broken, nearly unintelligible words she spoke. The doctor stepped out to Colonel Dangerfield and told him of this—urging at the same time the great necessity of Squire Darling's speedy arrival if he would see his mother living.

The messenger could not find him; he must have pursued his fugitive daughter and her lover to Harper's Ferry. "I will go myself in search of him," said Colonel Dangerfield, and ringing, he ordered the fleetest and strongest horse in the stables to be saddled and brought around. And in ten minutes Colonel Dangerfield was urging his fiery steed to its utmost speed over the hills and precipices that lay between Oak Grove and Harper's Ferry.

Hours passed on, during which the old lady's life seemed ebbing fast away. Again she strove to speak; and when the physician bent down close to hear her words she articulated with great difficulty—"Margaret—Imogene—my children!" and Mrs. and Miss Summerfield were permitted to approach her bedside. She looked on them with so much love struggling through the deathly agony of her face!

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She tried again to speak; Mrs. Summerfield, her eyes streaming with tears, bent over to catch the words. It was an abortive effort. The aged countenance was convulsed a moment and then settled—they thought in death. But it was not so—again, and oh! with what a power!—with what a conquering omnipotence of mighty love! the soul struggled for a moment to overcome, to pierce through the physical torpor—the mortal torpor—to commune with its mortal love! It conquers! it conquers! light again melts through the glazed eyes! the pinched and sunken lips again move! Mrs. Summerfield bends to catch the words—"Winny—Winny—forgive—love—bless!"

She was sinking again.

At a sign from the priest all knelt to offer up the solemn prayers of the church.

* * * * * *

One circumstance must be noted even at this sacred bedside. As they arose from their knees, the eyes of the young priest chanced to fall on those of Imogene, his hand to touch hers, and every vestige of color vanished from her high royal brow, leaving it pallid as marble, while a visible shudder shook her imperial form, till it rocked as a storm-loosened pillar. The physician drew her arm within his own and led her from the room.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE GRETNA-GREEN OF THE OLD DOMINION.

They stood, that gentle pair,
With the blue heaven of evening above,
And forest odors dying on the air,
And light leaves trembling round, and early love
Deep in each breast. What recked *their* souls of strife?

* * * * * *

They stood that hour,
Speaking of hope while mountain, fount, and flower,
And star just gleaming through the cedar boughs
Seemed holy things as records of their vows;
But change came o'er the scene. A hurrying tread
Broke on the whispering shades, and then she knew
The footstep of her father's wrath that fled
Up whence the cedars made yon avenue
Dim with green twilight: glitt'ring there she caught,
Was it the flash of swords? a swift, dark thought
Struck down her lip's rich crimson as it passed,
And from her eye the sunny sparkle took
One moment with its fearfulness, and shook
Her slight frame fiercely, as a stormy blast
Might shake the rose. Once more and yet once more,
She stilled her heart to listen. All was o'er!—*Hemans.*

EXCEPT the Falls of Niagara, the Falls of the Shenandoah, at Harper's Ferry, present perhaps the most awfully sublime prospect in America. The best view is that from the top of the "Pinnacle," a rugged rock on the Maryland side of the Potomac, towering twelve hundred feet above the rushing river. From the little tongue of land between the two rivers at their juncture, and the two precipices of the mountain at its gap, the emotions arising from the beautiful and sublime in Nature are pleasurable to a rapturous—to an ecstatic degree—but such emotions change their nature as

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the grand becomes the terrific—the terrific, stupendous! Few of our people have contempt enough for fatigue, or veneration enough for Nature, to dare the laborious ascent of the Pinnacle to its highest point; fewer still have nerve enough to venture to the maddening edge of the tremendous precipice and look down. Something of the wild savage in her nature, that teaching never could tame, nor sorrow quite subdue, tempted *one* to the summit of that mountain, and to the very edge of that delirious precipice. At the first fearful look below, the whole stupendous scene moved—swam—*whirled* around, as though from the mountain-top she beheld the whole earth rolling away from beneath her feet; and overwhelmed by the painful, the intolerable sense of the awful fall, had nearly fallen. As soon as this first delirium of the nerves is over, this chaos of the mind settled, and mountain, glen and torrent fixed each in its place, the grandly expanded and deepened landscape, the nearly boundless depth and extent, seems as if the whole immense earth were hollowed out, cup-like, to its very centre, and became a measureless green valley with its grand circumference of mountains, upon the very edge of the highest of which we stand! Below us fall rock after rock, precipice below precipice, and abyss below abyss of foliage to an interminable depth, seemingly passing through the dark centre of the earth itself, and lost in the immensity of space!

It is *not* inspiring—*not* exalting! Oh! far from it! It is depressing, horribly depressing. Before the majesty of soulless matter, the soul—the deathless—the daring—the immortal—shrinks with a shuddering sense of helplessness, of lostness; and believes in the possibility of annihilation!

The lower points of this rock are frequently resorts of the worshipers of the sublime; but I never heard of but *two* who ascended to the summit and came to the edge of the precipice, and one of these two registered a vow in Heaven, that

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if ever she got back safe and sane upon the broad bosom of mother earth, never to risk her sanity and her faith in the supremacy of the soul, and the immortality of mind, by confronting mere matter in its most awful—most terrific majesty!

But Harper's Ferry possesses other points of interest besides the terrific scenery. It is rich in revolutionary lore and Indian tradition—and it is, besides, the Gretna-Green of Virginia. The reader will recollect that the laws governing the social and domestic relations of Virginia are founded, wherever the difference of position permits, upon those of England. In Virginia, as in England, the marriage of minors without the consent of their parents and guardians, is illegal, null and void. Now, though Harper's Ferry is in Virginia, yet it is upon the very boundary river separating that state from Maryland, and a short distance from the County Court-House of Washington County in the latter State. Hence it is the most convenient place for the purpose, and is the resort of all the indiscreet and disobedient boys and girls of Virginia, who choose to cast their fate upon the hazardous die of a rebellious and premature marriage. You would scarcely believe how many of these marriages come off every week at that place. So frequent are they, that an agent there keeps constantly on hand a file of blank licences, purchased from the County Clerk at Hagerstown, to be filled up when wanted. These marriages take place upon the bridge across the Potomac, beyond the high-water-mark. And the State of Maryland annually gains many thousand dollars from the State of Virginia from that one source. At the time I write of, there was no bridge, and the present hotel did not exist, but on its site was a smaller one kept by a Mr. Smilie, who owned the ferry-boat that plied between it and the opposite shore.

It was there, on the afternoon of a sultry September day, that a very youthful pair rode in "hot haste," travel-stained,

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fatigued, and pale, up in front of the rural tavern. A hostler came out to take charge of the horses, and Ardenne dismounting, lifted Winny from her saddle. The host, a daper little man, with a round and smiling face, came out to meet and conduct them in.

"Is the Reverend Mr. Burleigh at the ferry?" inquired Ardenne, in a low voice, as he drew the arm of Winny within his own, and led her into the house.

"Yes, yes; *he's here!*" answered the host, with a sly smile, and a confidential air.

Now there were really no confidences between Ardenne and the hotel-keeper, to whom both himself and Winny were perfect strangers; but the former understood at a glance the state of affairs between the youthful couple, and lent himself to them accordingly.

For one minute, Winny was left in the parlor alone, while Ardenne went to procure a small printed slip of paper at the bar. Then returning, he drew her arm within his own and led her down to the beach, where waited the ferry-boat to convey them across to the Maryland side.

Winny was deadly pale, and looked exhausted, but recognizing Father Burleigh in the boat, her spirits revived an instant as she raised and kissed his hand. As they were going over the river, she raised her eyes to his venerable face, *so* beseechingly, and murmured:

"Oh! Father Burleigh, do you think that we are doing so *very* wrong?"

"It is over late to ask that question *now*, Miss Darling."

"True," replied Winny, sadly—and like many other prospective wrongdoers, she wished the wrong at once completed, and the struggle over.

They gained the other side—they landed immediately under the dizzy heights of the Pinnacle. They stood before the priest, with the tavern-keeper and the ferryman for the witnesses. The book was opened—the imposing ceremony commenced—completed.

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The boy folded his childbride to his bosom, and they were turning to leave the place, when the upraised hand and warning voice of the priest arrested them.

"I might not refuse to wed you; *but*—such a marriage seldom, *very* seldom prospers! Boy and girl, you have in your proper selves sinned again the sin of our first parents! You have in your proper persons incurred again the CURSE! Son of Adam! in taking this child from her parent's bosom thou hast plucked again the forbidden fruit! Ardenne, in pain of body, in anxiety of mind, in failure of strength and disappointment of heart, shalt thou expiate thy sin!—and Winny! Boy, she has incurred the sorrows that wait on filial impiety, disobedience and rebellion—*but I charge thee* to bear her up and on through them all—"

Ardenne clasped Winny more closely to his heart—

"As thou would'st merit and win a final forgiveness from Heaven!"

"At least we shall, together, meet whatever comes," was the uppermost thought in the heart of both, as they re-entered the ferry-boat.

"Poor child, poor child—where do you intend to take her now, Ardenne?" asked the priest.

"We shall remain here to-night, and to-morrow, Winny?" said the youth, suddenly appealing to the girl.

"'To-morrow,' oh! to-morrow—very, *very early*, to-morrow, we must return to Oak Grove—must go at once to father, and to dearest, dearest grandmother!"

They landed on the other side and were walking toward the house, when, suddenly thundering down the hill, came a horseman at headlong speed, and Squire Darling throwing himself frantically from the saddle, rushed furiously toward the party, his face purple, his frame violently shaking with the very frenzy of anger, brandishing two swords, and exclaiming:

"Thief! kidnapper! villain! scoundrel! traitor! knave!

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accursed knave! draw and defend your reptile life, that I may not have the sin of murder on my soul!" He hurled one sword at Ardenne with so much violence that it must have struck him, but that Winny, with the instinct of devotion and the speed of light, threw herself upon his bosom, receiving upon her own person the blow which felled her bleeding to the earth.

"Murderer! you have killed your daughter!" exclaimed the priest, in the extremity of horror.

"Devil send I had killed them *both!*" roared the madman —white with terror, nevertheless. Ardenne had sunk down and raised her partly on his lap, laid her falling head upon his bosom, and oh, in a remorse—in a bitter, bitter sorrow, impossible to describe, impossible to conceive, was wiping with his handkerchief the blood that oozed from some inward wound from her lips; while the priest kneeling, laved the young deathlike brow and temples with cold water. The frenzy, the dizzy, the blind delirium of his fury having been momentarily shocked away, Squire Darling stood struck statue-still with horror and remorse—an instant—and then advanced slowly, deprecatingly forward to look in fear upon his work, muttering to himself, "God Almighty knows I did not mean to strike *her!*"

The news of this act spread rapidly. "Arrest the murderer! Arrest Squire Darling! Arrest him! Strike him down if he resists!" sounded from all sides as the villagers came running to the scene of the catastrophe. Disturbed by the noise, Winny opened her gentle eyes, and fixing them tenderly on her father's countenance, murmured faintly:—

"No—not hurt. I am not—hurt—dear father—not *much*," and then sank exhausted.

"Arrest Squire Darling! Arrest the unnatural monster! Knock him on the head if he resists!" thundered the crowd, pouring in, and a score of hands fell upon the squire.

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Breaking from them with the strength and fury of an unchained demon, he roared in a frenzy of remorse, despair and rage:

"H—l and furies! Let me get at him! He has made me kill my child! let me finish the work by killing *him!*" and would have fallen with a frantic ferocity upon Ardenne, but that a dozen hands intercepted the raining blows of his arms, while cries of "Arrest him!" "Knock him down!" "Unnatural monster!" resounded from all quarters.

At this moment, "Hands off Squire Darling, instantly! and disperse, every one of you to your homes!" exclaimed a stern, deep-toned voice, and Colonel Dangerfield, in the calm majesty of his self-possession and authority, stood in their midst. And, to Squire Darling, who was still struggling violently to get at Ardenne, he said, "Madman! double murderer! desist and follow me! Your mother, *your mother* is dying!"

Aroused by the sound, the violet eyes of the prostrated girl once more flew open. She sprang to her feet, stretched out her arms appealingly to Colonel Dangerfield, and gasping in heart-breaking accents, "No, no! no, no! Oh, God, no! *not* so! not—*dying!* oh, *not dying!*" But the blood again gushed from her mouth, and she sank back into the extended arms of the wretched Ardenne.

"Bear her to the house at once, Mr. Ardenne. Mr. Smilie, send instantly for a surgeon. Squire Darling, I believe, I hope your daughter is not mortally wounded; but your mother is dying; you had best ride, at once, to Oak Grove. Good people all—disperse to your homes—you do no good, but every sort of harm, here I commanded Colonel Dangerfield, who, of all the party, was the only one left in possession of his senses. His directions were generally followed. Ardenne, who, struck speechless with despair, had, from first to last, never once spoken, now moved off with his beloved burden. The squire, frenzied, con-

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vulsed, white, foaming and frothy, yet exhausted and nearly idiotic with the effect of the fury of contending passions, mechanically got into his saddle.

CHAPTER XIII.

OAK GROVE.

See'st thou yon gray gleaming hall,
Where the deep oak shadows fall?
Voices that have left the spot
Long ago,
Still are murmuring round its hearth,
Soft and low:
Ever there, yet one alone
Hath the gift to hear their tone.
Guests come thither and depart,
Free of step and light of heart;
Children with sweet visions blest,
In the haunted chambers rest;
One alone unslumbering lies,
When the night hath sealed all eyes;
One quick heart and watchful ear,
Listening for those whispers clear.—*Hemans.*

A YEAR, with its moral and its atmospherical vicissitudes —with its toils and struggles—its hopes and fears—its disappointments and victories—its sins and sorrows—its loves and joys—a year, with its fruitful Autumn, its hoary Winter, its budding, blossoming Spring, and its exuberant luxuriance of Summer—has passed since the warm eve in September when Winny Darling gave herself to Edgar Ardenne.

Let us first take a glance at Oak Grove. Mrs. Darling, the old lady, whom we left prostrate on what we supposed to be her death-bed, did not, nevertheless, die then or there, nor did she yet fully recover. That strong, unyielding, in-

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vincible tenacity of vitality which distinguishes some organizations, successfully resisted death, and she lived; but what a wreck of her former self; more welcome, less appalling must have been death. She lived, and sat confined to her arm-chair, in her own lonely and solitary chamber, paralyzed in mind and body—nothing but the loving heart left living in its pristine, its immortal strength.

"Where is Winny? Send Winny to me! I *want* Winny!" she would pleadingly say to Sina Hinton, who, with her diabolical cunning, had contrived to get the chief charge and control of the unfortunate lady.

"Yes, yes, we will send for her; you shall see her," Sina would reply.

"But *when*, *when*," with a childlike pertinacity she would entreat.

"Oh, to-morrow; you shall see Winny to-morrow," would be the reply of the guileful girl, thinking, perhaps, that the old lady would forget; but *no*, her *heart* never forgot. In the morning she would be sure to wake early, and insist on being dressed soon, and sit in her arm-chair, for "Winny is coming to-day," she would say to her old waiting-maid; and the poor old servant, not knowing that her lady had been deceived by a promise, and thinking that in *that* also her mind wandered, would go out to weep over the ruined intellect of her old, old companion and mistress of nearly three-quarters of a century. And as the hours passed and the day advanced, the invalid would look, and watch, and inquire, and weep; and sometimes, with a prophetic glimpse of the truth, she would say—her very errors of speech making her lamentations more pathetic—

"Oh, I shall see Winny *never* no more, *never* no more."

She knew Sina Hinton perfectly; for, as her intellect weakened, her instincts became more subtle.

"Send that girl away," she would say to her son, in the very presence of Sina, "she makes misery."

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But Sina Hinton—sweet, considerate, forgiving soul—would go to her, and coo and caress, while the old lady would shrink in loathing from her contact.

"What an angel of goodness you are, Miss Hinton. And, oh, my poor mother, what a wreck, what a wreck; and to think that she should injure *you* so, Sina, sweet, soft Sina; but never mind, my darling girl, sole comfort of my afflictions, my consoler, my beautiful consoler. Never mind, bear this a little longer; do not leave me. Oh, Sina, how shall I ever repay you, my best, best girl, for all your self-devotion in staying here? But never mind, Sina, you *shall* be rewarded, *richly* rewarded, *by George* you shall!" the squire would exclaim, with enthusiastic gratitude.

Thus the instincts, the inspirations of the old lady were neglected as the senseless gibberish of dotage, while the falsities of the doubly-dyed traitress were received as so much holiness and truth. Her intuition soon divined the influence this fatal girl possessed with her son—the ascendency she was gradually gaining over him; and daily would she bow her pure heart before this polluted power, and plead for her she loved.

"Send for Winny. Let *Winny* come home, and take the rest, that is *all* I want in this world. *Winny home;*" and daily the deceitful girl would promise that "Winny should come to-morrow," and daily that promise would be broken, and the sad plaint would recur, "Oh! I shall *never* see Winny again, *never* no more!" But the words do not suggest the tone of deep despair in which they were uttered. Thus day after day, in sickening "hope deferred," lingered this loving and suffering heart. Who can guess the torture, the anguish of this soul, feeling most poignantly all the sorrows of a bereavement she could yet neither understand nor cure. She seemed *once* to feel that Winny was suffering from poverty—not from hearing any one *say* so, for the name of the lost daughter

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"Was banished from each lip and ear,
Like words of wantonness or fear,"

but from a sort of instinct. One day, while her old waiting-maid was dressing her, she said suddenly, "Go and ask my son to send me some money." And when the servant went, and when the squire, greatly wondering at what he called his "old mother's new whim," sent back the purse, she took it, examined the contents, and then returning it to the hand of the old maid, said, "Send this to *Winny;* now, do you hear, Maul? send this to *Winny*—and do not say a word about it to any one. Why doesn't she come? Why doesn't she come? Tell her I am not angry with her, poor child; tell her I pray for her, I love her, I bless her; tell her to come and *not* be afraid." This was the first of September. And from that time for weeks when her meals were brought to her, she laid by the choicest morsels on a separate plate, and would say confidentially to her maid, "*Carry that to Winny.*" And the old servant would humor what she called her "whims," by taking the plate out, pretending to obey her. Sometimes her mind wandered sadly. One night Squire Darling came into her room to ask her how she felt herself. He expressed surprise at finding her still up. "Oh, child! I am waiting for Winny to come and comb my hair." She answered as quietly as if Winny had never left home. Sometimes her imbecility bordered upon actual insanity. Once—this was in the middle of September—old Nerve coming to the house to pay her "duty to old mistress," went up to her room, and found her tottering about the chamber, holding on to chairs and by bed-posts, and taking down chintz and gingham wrappers that hung in the wardrobe or upon wooden pins against the wall. As her faithful servant entered, she sank, trembling, into a chair, and pointing to the little pile, she said: "Take—carry it to poor Winny—it will do to make the baby some slips."

"The baby!" exclaimed old Nerve, in perplexity.

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"Yes, Winny has been here to-day. She came in at the door, looking so thin and pale, and dressed so poorly—and she carried a little bit of a baby in her arms; poor thing, she's nothing but a baby herself—and she brought it and laid it on my lap—and asked me what she should call her little girl, and I told her to call it Angela, after her mother. And then *Sina Hinton* came to the door, and Winny ran away frightened. Now carry this bundle to Winny—tell her she may take it, for it is *mine, my clothes.* I have given every thing else away to my son and daughter and have nothing left but these—my clothes. Tell Winny I am coming to live with her, and nurse her until she gets well, for she is sick." Thus reason and madness strove in her mind; and she who remembered her own destitution of property, forgot her utter inability to take care of herself—much less another. Nerve gathered up the things, and took them out of her room to "humor old mist'ess."

And—will it be asked—had this beautiful love—still more beautiful amid the ruins of her body and her mind—had this beautiful love no power to soften the heart of the son and father toward his daughter? Little, or no power. Squire Darling was not one to appreciate the spiritual, the divine loveliness of this principle—outliving, as it did, the death of all else. His mother was "old and childish—it would not do to mind her," he would say with a sigh. And sometimes, in some less stern mood, he would say: "If Winny would discard the fellow, would promise never to see, or speak to him again; never to write, send a message, or receive one from the rascal, *then*, disobedient and rebellious as she had been, she might come back, he would forgive her; but never, *never*, NEVER, while she was the wife of that infernal scoundrel who stole her, his only child, from his bosom, should she enter his doors, for any purpose whatever, so help him God." And he "hoped that she would be frozen, starved and worked into some sense of her

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guilt yet." And then again, he would furiously inquire, "Why does not the ungrateful huzzy *write* to me? No, she has never written me *one letter*, she does not care for me, she is entirely taken up with her pretty fellow—devil burn him. I'm nobody but an old fool, that might be useful in pushing on my gentleman—set fire to him. I'd push him up a ladder to the gallows, with infinite good will."

Those who are in the habit of observing human nature have noticed—and sex must have something to do with it—that *mothers* are rather apt to be jealous of their son's wives, while they have no such feelings toward their daughters' husbands—and on the contrary, *fathers*, who are extremely given to love and pet their daughters-in-law, not seldom grow very jealous of their sons-in-law. This feeling is increased in strength a hundred fold in the case of an *only* child. Squire Darling was an extreme case of the latter instance. From his *own* nature, and from the nature of his love for Winny, as his only child, his sole, exclusive affection, he must have been jealous of any man who could *rival*, much more *exceed* him in her heart, and would have had to struggle with a tendency to dislike her lover, or husband, however high in birth and rank, and rich in wealth and distinction he might have been; and toward Ardenne, one without faimly, without fortune, without distinction or influence of any sort, and one who had besides stolen his daughter away, he bore the most jealous, burning, and consuming hatred. He who liked "a good hater," would have rejoiced in Squire Darling.

Mrs. Summerfield would often visit her mother, and wished with true filial duty and affection to take her over to Red-Stone Hall, to assume the whole charge and care of the invalid herself, but the old lady refused to stir from Oak Grove.

"No, no, Margaret. I love you dearly, my daughter; but you are rich and happy, and have health and friends,

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and do not need me. No, no, Margaret; I must wait here for poor Winny. If she ever comes back, I want to be here to receive her, and to protect her from her father's rage, you know. No, no, Margaret; I must stay here and wait for poor Winny; or if I go any where, I must go live with Winny, to *take care of her*, poor baby!" she would persist, forgetful of her inability.

Mrs. Summerfield had once spoken to her brother in behalf of his erring child; but the ungovernable fury into which the very sound of her name threw him, the frightful oaths with which he swore that so long as she even went by the name of that "thrice accursed scoundrel," she should never blast his sight by crossing his threshold for any purpose whatever, shocked and stunned the lady into that strict silence upon the subject of the lost daughter, that had been sternly enforced upon every other member of the family.

Sina Hinton! More than any other evil character it has been my fate to portray, I detest Sina Hinton! We admire the fierce beauty and strength of the lion and the tiger, even when shunning their destroying fury; but we loathe the slime of the serpent even more than we fear the venom of its fangs. Sina Hinton played her part as she knew how to play it—artfully intercepting all letters and messages, and skillfully preventing all interviews that promised the most distant hope of a reconciliation; and withal, making herself so necessary to all the family, as to draw from the reserved and dignified Mrs. Summerfield, the frequent commendation of—"Miss Hinton, my brother and myself can never do enough to testify our appreciation and our gratitude for all your goodness."

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CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT LOVE IN A COTTAGE IS SOMETIMES LIKE

Patience and sorrow strive
Which shall express her goodliest.—*Shakespeare.*

WINNY DARLING had been brought up with even more tenderness than Southern girls usually are. A grandmother's pet from earliest infancy—an only child of his idolized and lost wife, a father's half-worshiped darling—the heiress besides of an immense fortune—Winny had been surrounded from babyhood with a love and an observance that had guarded her from even the idea of inconvenience of any sort, much less from hardship. So much love, and I had almost said *reverence*, paid to a child naturally less amiable than Winny, would have spoiled her disposition as it spoiled her ability. In her father's house, Miss Darling had been wakened by her maid every morning at seven o'clock to take her bath. Then while sitting at her ease, her hair had been combed out and curled, and her shoes and stockings put on, and afterward her morning toilet completed, without a thought or an act of her own in the matter. Old Nerve had washed and dressed her "little missey" when she was six days old, and she continued to do it when she was sixteen years, without a thought of ceasing. Her grandmother, too, had expressed an opinion that it was much better for a young maiden like Miss Darling, to have an old, faithful, and attached dressing-maid, than a young and thoughtless one as ignorant as herself. So Nerve had remained in her service, petting

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and spoiling her to her heart's content, and guarding her as carefully from learning to think or act for herself, as she would have shielded her from war, pestilence, or famine. Winny's rooms, wardrobe, books, music, pictures, etc., were kept in order; and her walks, rides, baths, etc., arranged without a single volition of her own will in the matter. It was one of the "thirty-nine articles" of their religious creed to love and serve Miss Darling. Or if Winny did any little voluntary bit of work, it was some unnecessary trifle, to which her affectionate heart alone would prompt her—such as displacing her grandmother's maid, for the sake of bathing, rubbing, and caressing the old lady's feet, or doing the duty of her father's body-servant, by mixing his mint-julep, and setting him to swearing by spoiling it! Upon such occasions he wanted to know what the mischief was the use of his having half a thousand of lazy negroes, if his daughter had to wait upon him like a foot-boy. He wanted to know, for instance, what was the utility of anybody having dogs and barking themselves. And if Winny put in any sweet, affectionate word about the duty and the pleasure of waiting on her father, he would call it romantic rubbish, and say that things were adapted to uses, and uses to things; and that to put Winny Darling to mixing toddy, was about as wise as to take one of her own silk scarfs to wipe tumblers with. I am sorry to acknowledge it—but as there is a necessity upon me to speak and write the truth without idealizing—it must be confessed that these instances betray more innate vulgarity than chivalric feeling in the pride of our fat and fair-haired squire.

Madame Winifred, with all *her* refinement, fully appreciated the religious sentiment in Winny's love and proffered services, though she *would* sometimes say to her:

"There are other and more useful ways of revealing affection, my own darling, than by these menial services that any other might do as well."

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"Ah, but grandmother, don't you know that the more humble a service is, the deeper the pleasure it gives me? When I am sitting on the floor, bathing your dear white feet, grandmother, or when I am combing out your long, soft hair, I have a feeling of *profound content* as when I hush my heart and bow my head to receive the priest's *benedicite*."

And sometimes, in a lighter mood, she would say:

"Indeed, grandmother, you would let me be your little waiting-maid, if you only believed what a hourly satisfaction, what a real substantial earthly *bread-and-meat* satisfaction it would be to me. It is such a starvation of the heart to keep my hands away from any one I love; and it is such a downright, heartfelt content, such a feast, to be fingering about them."

But I have been led too far from the point of time. Now all was changed with Winny. She had fallen, smote down to the earth by the sudden news that her beloved grandmother was dying. Fainting from the loss of blood, she had been carried into the small tavern and laid upon a humble bed in a hot, close little room, which was, nevertheless, the best one in the house. When restoratives were applied, and she recovered from one fainting fit with renewed reason and memory, it was only to fall into another and more dangerous one. Indeed, the physician said that it was only the free bleeding of the lungs, dangerous though it was, and the extreme physical prostration caused thereby, together with the counter irritation, that preserved her brain and saved her reason from a total and final overthrow. Thus for weeks she lay alternating between death-like swoons and short, convulsive spasms of life, of keenest anguish and remorse.

And all this time Ardenne, in the bitterness of a sorrow and repentance scarcely less than her own, watched by her bedside; nor night, nor day, for an hour resigned his post,

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while flesh and health and strength passed from him unnoticed, until he grew as thin, as pale, and almost as feeble as the wan form languishing, withering before him. Was it a really sincere repentance then? Did they *indeed* wish that their error could be blotted out—the ill-starred marriage under the rock could be annulled, and each restored—she to her family, he to his freedom? No! No! No! By all the mutual anguish—by all the remorse that only served to knit their hearts more closely together—*No!* Each felt, in the first calmly conscious meeting of their eyes, each felt more than ever *now*, in this season of bitter trial, that were the whole past to be lived over, the error would be committed, the anguish risked again. No, no, *nothing* but the hopeless, the impossible defection of one or of the other, could have brought either to wish their act annulled. Yet Squire Darling, quoting the familiar proverb, "When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window," hoped and believed that their attachment would, in a few weeks or months, be starved, or frozen, or fatigued out. And it may be so with a hasty, fanciful, and factitious sentiment, a tinsel counterfeit of the pure gold of affection; but *theirs*, with all the sin and sorrow it had caused, was, nevertheless, deep, earnest, and *true;* may their patience and fidelity atone for and redeem them! Their honeymoon was not that of romantic young lovers, though be it remembered *both* were *very* young—he nineteen, she sixteen. No! It had been passed in agony of body and anguish of mind; prostrate upon a bed of extreme illness by Winny, and in constant, fatiguing, sorrowful, and remorseful watching by Ardenne. But they were unselfish, disinterested, devoted; and this sorrow endeared them to each other more, oh, how much more than weeks passed in health and revelry. Every care he lavished upon the languishing one—every fatigue he endured for her sake—but deepened his affection for her, but riveted his attachment to

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her. "I am proving what the inspired angel said," he thought; "I am proving that bodily pain and fatigue, *without* moral suffering, endured for a loved one, is a deep, religious joy—*with* and *for* moral suffering, it is an alleviation or cure." Her suffering, his devotion, their youth and beauty and warm affection, drew around them the sympathies of all the small town; yes, the sympathies even of the cold-hearted gathered around their loves, as the shivering draw around a warm hearth for its pleasant heat. Of course the whole story was known; and I am afraid Squire Darling's conduct and character suffered more severe animadversion than was strictly just. The two best physicians of the county, Doctors Tidball and Lackland, attended her, yet both declared that all their science would have been powerless to have saved her life, had it not been for the constant, the vigilant, the untiring care of Ardenne, and the inspired tact, amounting almost to a sixth sense, with which he instantly detected the mutations and crisis of her illness. With all this care her life was saved; but it was four weeks before it was deemed safe to tell her any news that might startle or surprise. At last, about the first of October, she was told that her grandmother still lived—that though paralyzed, there was no immediate fear of her death. But oh! Could Winny rejoice in that spared life, with that shattered frame and ruined mind? Her slow, extremely slow convalescence, was passed in penitential tears and prayers, alas! so inconsistently for a fault she felt she should commit again, were the temptation again before her. But perhaps Winny prayed, as I am afraid too many of us *do* quite unconsciously pray, namely, to be forgiven, to be remitted the just punishment of the sin, not to be cleansed from the dear sin itself. And for Ardenne, it did seem too severe—it would have wearied out any one less patient than himself, to find that after all his devotion to her, after all his nights and days of extreme

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fatigue and anxiety, that after his almost miraculous restoration of her life, her convalescence should be passed in weeping and wailing. But *he* never thought of that, never, *never* grew tired of trying to soothe, to console her. Thus passed the second month of their marriage.

It was the first of November before she was able to leave her room. She wrote to her father imploring his forgiveness—imploring permission only to come and see her poor, dear grandmother. To this letter she received this curt and sharp reply.

"When you have bidden a final farewell to the accursed hireling knave who stole his master's daughter from his house—when you have sworn never to see, speak to, or write to him, or receive any letter or message from him—when in short, you part with him as with the dead—*then*, and not *till* then, shall you enter my house. You need send no more letters, for I shall reply to none not prefaced with the surrender of the d—d footman you have married. You know the terms, and you know *me*.

JARED DARLING."

Ardenne and Winny were sitting together when this cruel letter came. She read it, and the sudden, deep despair that struck all color from her very lips, revealed to Ardenne the death of her hopes. Winny looked at him, and held the letter toward the fire.

"Yes! burn it, darling!" said Ardenne, divining her embarrassment; and she let it go into the blaze, and dropped herself into the kind arms opened to receive her. Not a word more was said about the letter.

"Winny, love! we must leave this place; do you not know it?"

"Oh, yes!"

"There are two plans, Winny, that I have to propose to

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you. The first is, that we shall go to the Western country—to begin life with a new territory, a young couple in a young State, and grow with it. There, Winny, I should not dread a failure in a competition with the strongest! A few years of healthful toil, and then a brilliant future!" and for the first time since their ill-omened marriage, his eyes sparkled as he spoke.

"And the other plan, Edgar?"

"Is this, my darling—To stay here yet a few years, and meet what threatens; for I think, Winny, that you would grieve to desert the neighborhood, while your good and suffering grandmother still lives; you would grieve to leave her ill and suffering, with the certainty of never seeing her again!"

"But, Edgar! I could not, upon that account, blight all your future life! *Now* could she advise—grandmother, herself, would not counsel me to do it."

"Love! love! I am not twenty, yet—staying here a few years, would *not* 'blight' all my future life—while leaving her now, might sadden all *yours*. It is *that* I would avert, Winny."

"Ardenne! will you do as you please—being sure that I shall know it to be altogether right?"

"But, I would have your counsel, Winny."

"Ah! I wish I *could* assist you with my thoughts—but I have no knowledge of the world, you know."

"Your thoughts are purer—your counsel *really* wiser for that, my love—knowledge of the world is oftentimes a gambler's knowledge of tricks at cards—and we do not wish to enter life as a game, dear; so give me your honest thoughts."

"Oh, but Edgar! my judgment is not good."

"You have been told so, dear, until you believe it! Whoever could have taught you so, dear? You must not set out by being persuaded that you have a poor judgment,

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and then let it grow really imbecile for want of exercise. In this march of life, I do not wish to go on in advance alone, selfishly laying out the future and turning to consort with you only in hours of idleness and relaxation. No! I love you too entirely—too wholly; we must be one in *mind*, as in heart; I would have you go step by step with me—if you fail to come up, I must fall back. Now to return to this subject, Winny, we must decide it soon. What is your opinion?"

"Dear Edgar; can I take the responsibility of advising you when inclination so strongly biases the little judgment I have—"

"And this inclination, Winny; I divine it."

In a word, it was settled between them that they should remain in the neighborhood for the present. And then he drew a small table to the fire, between them, and said:

"Now, dear, let us see what we have to commence with," and taking out his purse, one that Winny had knit for him, he turned its contents upon the board—"Nineteen dollars." He wrote down that sum, and then taking his watch, chain and pencil, placed them with the money—"They cost two hundred dollars—they will bring half price;" he wrote down one hundred. A seal-ring drawn from his little finger was added to the pile, and "ten dollars" added to the list. Then a very small diamond brooch, which he valued at fifteen dollars, completed the sum. And Winny drew from her finger a small ring, a ruby heart, set around with pearls, and laid it with the others, saying:

"That is all I have; I never carried a purse of money, or a watch and chain, never having use for either; but that little ring is valuable, I think, as a *ring*."

And Ardenne silently took it up, and would have replaced it on the small finger; but with a smile she stopped him, pointing to the third finger of her left hand, she said:

"See! I have still another ring! a dearer ring, that shall never leave my finger!"

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"We have about a hundred and fifty dollars then, dear."

"Oh! I have more jewelry at home, a great deal more—a complete set of pearls and a complete set of sapphires—I wonder if I were to send for my wardrobe, if father would send them to me?"

"Do not send for them, Winny."

"And then there is my little Seafoam—a small fortune to you and me."

"He must be returned to your father's stables, dear. It should have been done long ago, but I waited to speak to you on the subject."

"But why? *why*?—he was purchased for *me*."

"For your *use*, dear; you were a minor; you owned *nothing*—not your palfry—not your jewelry."

"Still, if we send Seafoam home, my father will send him back, since no one wants him there; and if my father happens to think of my wardrobe, books, piano, and all my little personal effects, he will be sure to send them, for he may be furious and destroying, but not mean in his revenge."

"I shall be glad for your sake then, dear Winny."

That same evening Ardenne hired a man to take back Seafoam to Oak Grove. He himself got in the stage and rode to Winchester, to dispose of their jewelry, which, contrary to his expectations, brought them nearly two hundred dollars. With that he returned to Winny, and to settle their debts, that had remained unpaid up to this time.

Then it was that Ardenne tasted for the first time *one* of the "sweets" of adversity, in finding how much goodness, how much simple generosity, and guileless, unconscious magnanimity, may exist among the roughest and most unpretending of our fellow-creatures. First he called for the host and his bill; and the little, fat landlord, with his round baby face and simple manner, entered the parlor.

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"I have to apologize for not asking for, and settling my bill before, Mr. Smilie—but—well! Mrs. Ardenne and myself leave you to-day, and so I wish to settle with you now."

Now this little, round landlord had a bad name in the county—a thriftless, good-for-nothing fellow, always in debt, always behind hand, never quite sober—though never altogether drunk. At this moment he had not five dollars in his till; for, be it remembered that Harper's Ferry was not *then* the great railway thoroughfare that it is *now*, nor did it boast the comfortable and well-kept hotel that *now* marks the site where *then* stood the little tavern, kept by the little landlord, Sammy Smilie, the brother of the priest's housekeeper.

"Have you the *bill* about you, sir?"

The little host sat down in a chair, drew up his feet, rubbed and stroked his little, fat knees, and—*smiled*. Ardenne was standing before him, pocket-book in hand, enacting patronizing wealth.

"The *bill*, if you please, sir—we are hurried."

"The bill! oh—aye—yes, to be sure! the bill—I—I've *mislaid* it somewhere—it—it's *lost*—some other time!"

"Can't you recollect the *amount*, sir?"

"The amount! oh! yes, certainly, the amount was—was—it's gone *clean* out of my head! 'pon my word, I don't know what the amount was—*any* other time will do as well!"

"Be so good as to make it out again, if you please, sir."

"I—I—I haint *time*—indeed, indeed I haint!" said the landlord, with awkward embarrassment, yet looking so lovingly at the poor young pair—as if his little lymphatic body were about to deliquesce in tears.

"It will take you but a moment, Mr. Smilie!"

"But I haint that moment to spare! indeed, indeed I haint! I'm *very* busy—I'm—I'm *awfully* pushed with

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work! I—I 'clare to heaven, I am!" persisted the landlord, looking, in every soft curve of his gentle face and frame, the very image of an easy mind and infinite leisure. Ardenne could not fail to understand his simple hypocrisies now. He seized his little, chubby hand, and pressing it fervently, said,

"Smilie, my dear friend, I see your motive, and from the bottom of my heart thank you for your kindness; but you know, my good fellow, I cannot, with any sort of self-respect—"

Here the little host broke in, blushing like a schoolboy detected in lying, and exclaimed:

"Oh, my *dear* sir! Mr. Ardenne! I hadn't such a thought! *I* insult a gentleman in that way, because he is a little unfortunate, or so? *Never!*

"My good friend, I am not *insulted*. What! be *insulted* at your generous goodness, however mistaken it might be? In my turn, I say—*never!* Speak, Winny! speak, darling! for I see your face glowing, and your eyes full of sweet tears."

"I wanted to say," said Winny, taking the host's other chubby hand between her own delicate ones, "I wanted, so much, to say, that we should have more than the wickedness of Lucifer's own pride to get offended at your goodness, when we ought to be, and we are, very grateful. We shall never, never forget all your kindness to us," said she, very softly, with tears in her eyes, and caressing the good hand—"but you know, you must not think that we are ungrateful, or proud, because we refuse to remain in your debt—you must let us keep our self-respect—it is all that we have left."

Up bounded the little landlord like a little foot-ball, rolling and bouncing about the room in a perfect delirium of distress, exclaiming:

"Poor boy! poor girl! Nothing but children; nothing

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but babies! no forethought, no *airs* either. So simple, so good even in their nat'rel pride. May the devil fly away with me alive the day I take the first red penny from them. Has he got any business? Tell me *that*," demanded the landlord, suddenly confronting them.

"No, Smilie, my good friend, but—"

"*But*—but the winter's coming on, and winter's no joke in the mountains. See here, Mr. Ardenne; listen to *me* a while, and if I make you mad, without meaning to, I shall get this little dear child to make it up betwixt us. Jest let *that there* stand till the old man comes round. He'll *do it*; he *can't help it*. It's agin *nater* to hold out agin one's own dear child. I *know* it. I'm a father *myself*, you see; and no matter *what* my gall was to do—though God forbid she should hear me say it—I 'clare to God A'mighty I couldn't turn agin her; I couldn't indeed. And *he* wont, though he *oughter*, you know, children; and so, sir, just let the what-you-call-um stand awhile."

The little man seemed to even avoid *saying* "bill" or "account" to them.

But Ardenne was as obdurate in wishing to discharge his little obligations as ever creditor could have been in exacting a debt. Finally, the landlord promised him upon his word and honor—his *sacred* honor—that he would make out the account and send it to him in the course of that week, without fail—a promise which the little host had not the slightest idea of fulfilling.

I am sorry for it; sorry that a man of so much kindness of heart should have so little regard for his word, but it was "all along" of his having a big bump of benevolence, ditto firmness, and a very small hint of conscientiousness. Leaving their parlor he met the doctor, who had stopped to water his horses and *wine himself*.

"See here, doctor. Ah, I am glad I met you. *Don't* go in there; he'll be worrying you about paying his bill, and I heard you say, I think—*didn't I, doctor?*"

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"*What?* You heard me say nothing."

"Well, anyhow, I heard you *think* that you wouldn't be in a hurry about the thing-a-me."

Half-laughing, the doctor passed the bustling little landlord, and, notwithstanding his behest, went into the parlor. As he had anticipated, there stood Ardenne ready for him. He inquired about Winny's health, gave her some advice, and noticing a little hacking *cough* for the first time, asked her how she had got it. She did not know; it had come on very gradually; it was nothing, she said, only a little "tickling" in the region of the old hemorrhage. But the doctor looked very serious as he held her slightly feverish little hand, and observed the small isolated crimson spot, not larger than a rose-leaf, on her wan left cheek; and promised to come and see her often—*in a friendly way.* Then Ardenne expressed a wish to settle with him, to which the doctor replied in a cool, business-like manner, that he only sent out his accounts half-yearly—that the first of the coming January was the next epoch of settlement in order; and, drawing on his gloves and taking his hat, he wished them good-morning.

When the man commissioned to take Seafoam to Oak Hall arrived at its gates, he was told that the squire was taking his after-dinner nap; but that Miss Hinton, who acted for him in his absence, was at hand. So the man led beautiful Seafoam up to the front of the piazza, where Sina stood to receive him. Sending for a groom, she quietly dispatched the palfrey to the stables, and dismissed the messenger without a word. Nothing was said about the return of the pony, for Miss Hinton reminded the servants that they were forbidden by their master to make any—the slightest—allusion to his lost daughter. Squire Darling had never missed Seafoam from the stables—in short, had

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never wasted a single thought upon him, and of course knew nothing about his return. Thus Winny failed to receive again her favorite.

CHAPTER XV.

THEIR HOME.

A lone dwelling, built by whom or how,
None of the rustic mountain people know.
The cliff and house are high;
Nature with all her children haunts the hill;
The spotted deer basks in the fresh moonlight
Before the door; this is their home in life.—*Shelley.*

A DEEP shadow rested upon the brow of Ardenne, as, with Winny on his arm, he wended his way along a narrow path leading up the mountain side. The weight of a grave fault and a heavy responsibility was resting upon his young spirit. He had not felt this while Winny was ill; he had only striven to save her life—only prayed for her restoration—but now that she was spared to him, how was he to secure the happiness, or even the comfort, of this fragile life; how, with his utmost efforts, should he preserve her from the inevitable hardships in store for her? Every circumstance pressed this question home upon him. They had not walked a hundred yards up the hill before her cheek flushed deeply; and so great was the palpitation of her heart, that he felt the veins and nerves of the small arm resting on his own throb and tremble violently, and he reproached himself severely for suffering her to walk. Yet carriages and horses were very expensive, and economy must commence some time.

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"Winny, sit down here, dear, and rest awhile," he said, and arranged her a seat under a tree upon the side of the hill, with some broken pieces of rock, seated her carefully, and, sitting by her side, put his arm around her waist, and drawing her head down on his bosom, looked into her sweet wan face with such intense, absorbing interest as to seem, for a while, quite lost in the breathless contemplation. How faded, how broken she looked already! Oh, she was dying like a plucked flower on his bosom, and he could never survive her, he thought. Winny's sweet eyes, upturned to his, read the poor boy's thoughts, and she replied, softly smiling:

"Do not be uneasy about me, dear Edgar. You know people recovering from illness are always weak. I am ashamed of my long-continued weakness, and shall try to grow strong. I *am* gaining strength every day—"

Here she was interrupted by that *slight*, but constantly recurring cough.

"This will not do, either, dear; the dews are beginning to fall, and you will take cold," said he; and, after looking at her a moment with a faint smile, he stooped suddenly, and, before she could object, raised her light form in his arms and bore her up the hill. Arrived at the top, he put her down, and, drawing her arm again within his own, they resumed their walk.

"At least, now, there are *some* things, and they are the *best* things, too, that poverty cannot deprive us of, Edgar. Oh, Edgar! if it were not for—" and here she stopped, as if unwilling to sadden him uselessly by an allusion to their mutual and irreparable error; and here, too, she made a silent resolution *never* to trouble him again with her remorse.

"What were you saying, love?"

"I say, Edgar, that the wealth, ease, and luxury which we have lost are nothing in comparison to the blessings which yet remain to us. Come; *can* we count them up? Youth,

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health, hope, intelligence, and good looks, (let us be frank with each other,) and our mutual love: that to begin with. Then our little house, small and rude as it is, is *alone*—is on the Ridge, where the air is so light and pure, and the water so crystal clear and cold. I do not know whether it is because my lungs are extremely delicate and sensitive or not, but I find a great difference between valley air and mountain air. I find mountain air so easy to breathe; so light, thin, dry, and inflating. In valley air I detect a humidity and heaviness, even in dry weather. I always felt so light, and elastic, and cheerful on the mountain, in comparison to what I felt in the valley. I always said that I had rather live in a plain house on the mountain than a fine one in the valley. And then, too, I love the grand old gray rocks, and the great mountain pines. I have a feeling toward them like what I have toward good, wise, and strong *old folks*—a sense of protection, shelter, and safety near them. It is fancy, but it is a pleasant—nay, a *comfortable*—feeling. So you see, Edgar, you *couldn't* have suited me better than by settling on the Ridge. I always had an instinctive conviction that I required mountain air and water to make me a strong girl; and if it had not been for this wound—." Here she stopped suddenly, again reproaching herself that she had been hurried into an allusion to her father's violence.

This was the very first time that she had ever hinted the subject, and now she was agitated at having inadvertently done so. But Ardenne grew pale, stopped, and while one arm passed around her little waist and supported her, the other hand was laid upon the left side of her bosom, and, looking earnestly into her face, he inquired very seriously:

"Winny, dear, tell me, and tell me truth—*this wound of yours!*—there is no outward sign of its existence remaining—but—do you feel it still?"

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Winny remained silent. Her cheek flushed; she looked down.

"*Tell* me, Winny."

"Edgar!"

"Nay, dear, you *must* tell me; it is positively necessary that you do, love: say, does that wound still continue to hurt you?"

"*Yes.*"

Ardenne became very much agitated; it was with the utmost effort at self-control that he could speak steadily.

"How! Tell me all about it, my love."

"Well, then, it is always burning—burning as if a small coal of fire was there; it is that which flushes up my left cheek so."

Ardenne suppressed a heavy groan.

"And when you draw a long breath, Winny, does it hurt you more?"

"Yes; when I cough, or raise my voice, or draw a long breath, a sharp, burning pain darts from that spot, and scatters all over my chest, and flushes up my cheek."

The suppressed groan now burst forth in agony.

"*Don't* grieve, Edgar! Dear Edgar, *don't; please* don't. It is a *worse* anguish to see you grieve; besides, I know how to prevent this pain."

"How, dear!"

"By not *taking* a long breath, except when I forget myself or when I cannot help it."

"Oh, my God!—oh, Winny! Your father!—may the lightning of God's wrath scathe—"

"Hush! hush! Edgar," said Winny, closing his lips with her little emaciated hand, "my poor father did not mean it! Let us talk of something pleasant—our cabin."

"Rather, let us not cover up a misery or a danger, Winny, but face it, expose and examine it. Let us not attempt any amiable deception. Love! let us be open with each other—to begin, I know your thought!"

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"You do, Edgar?—you know, then, I struggle against it, too?"

"Yes, dear Winny!—you think that you bear your death-wound in your bosom!"

"I try *not* to think of it—and I pray God, night and day, to let me live!—and I shall *try* to live—for, above all things, I love life!—with all its trials, how I *do* love life! It may not be an exalted feeling, but it is *my* feeling. I shocked Sina, once, by telling her that I liked earth better than Heaven!—and so I do! Young as I am, this old earth seems to me like a dear old familiar place, where my life commenced many thousand years ago—and that I should not like to leave it for any *new*, strange place, even Heaven! I have always felt old—yet, no—not *old*—but as if I had lived an infinite past life of childhood and youth. I remember once I made a whole company laugh. They came to celebrate my birth-day—'Winny is five years old, to-day,' said my father. 'Oh, *father!* "five years old,"—I am a *million* of years old, at the very least!' said I, and they all laughed."

Ardenne was watching her with anxiety.

"Winny, dear, you are feverish and excited, you wander away from the subject. Winny, for your threatened disease there is no prevention or cure in the whole pharmacopœia!"

"*I know it!*"

"But, Winny, there is a remedy in the simplest elements of Nature I do not mean in vegetables or in minerals that may be naturally repugnant to the stomach, for they *have* a place in the pharmacopœia—but in simple elements in your constant use, that you cannot do without a day. You instinctively thought of them, love."

"Air, and water!"

"Yes, dear, pure air, pure water, rationally used, are the great agents in the prevention and cure of disease. I know and have faith in the principle, and with the blessing of the Lord, Winny, you shall live!"

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The last words brought them to a small, old clearing among the stunted pine trees, upon the very summit of the mountain, called Pine Cliffs. In the centre of this clearing, and enclosed by a low stone wall, stood an old but substantial building, of gray rock, surmounted by a steep roof. Pine Cliffs, as the place and the house was called, had been built, it was supposed, by the first Virginian Summerfield, as an occasional hunting-lodge. But as of late years that portion of their immense landed property had been sold by the Summerfields, and as the present proprietor, Colonel Dangerfield, had a much handsomer hunting-seat, furnished with all the most splendid appointments of the chase, this rude, strong lodge was suffered to go into disuse, and for many, many years, it had been left untenanted, except perhaps, when a bear, a wolf, or a wild-cat made it a temporary winter shelter. The reason of its being left so to solitude and to the work of the elements, was obvious—its extreme height and barren soil. Ardenne took it, because he had only the choice between that, a handsome seat in the valley, the rent of which he could never expect to pay, or a squalid house in Harper's Ferry; and Winny had said—

"Anywhere!—let us go anywhere where it is clean, and fresh, and cheap."

As they reached the spot, Ardenne led Winny to the stile, and helping her over, said—

"This is our home, Winny—turn, Winny! and observe the prospect from this spot."

And Winny, still leaning on his arm, turned to let her wondering and admiring eye rove over the whole great valley of the Shenandoah, rolled out like an immense map before them. At many hundred feet below and before them glided the undulating river, glittering and flashing like an enormous diamond serpent; across the river, to the right, where it swept around in the shape of a horse-shoe, stood the old murky building of Red-Stone Hall; to the left,

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many miles down, lay between two hills, sloping to the river, Oak Grove and Hall, with its distant Quarters gleaming through the trees. As her eyes fell for the first time for two months upon her home, a spasm seized her heart, but she said nothing. Still many miles below that towered Mount Eyrie, the magnificent hunting-seat of Colonel Dangerfield, with its chimneys in the clouds.

"It is a magnificent view!" said Winny; and then they went into the house.

They entered at once through the front door into the common room, or parlor, perhaps we may call it. It was furnished very plainly even for a country house, although Ardenne had laid out at least half his little fortune in getting it cleaned and fitted up. A rag carpet, a half-dozen flag-bottom chairs, country made, an oak table, a corner cupboard with glass doors, filled with a set of common white delf-ware, upon one side of the wide chimney,—a small clock on a triangular shelf in the opposite corner—with a common rug, and small brass andirons; a few book-shelves over the chimney-piece, and green paper blinds at the windows, completed the simple furniture of their sitting-room. But a pleasant, yes and a *painful* surprise awaited Winny then—a bright fire was glowing in the chimney—the tea-kettle was boiling over the blaze; and a little white tea-pot and a covered plate of buttered toast sitting on the hearth. In the middle of the floor stood the table, covered with a coarse but clean, white cloth, and set out with the service of white tea-cups, and saucers, and plates. Ardenne looked as much surprised as Winny did at this unexpectedly warm and homelike welcome—but before they had time to make a comment, old Nerve entered from the back door, and coming up toward Winny burst out crying and held out her arms.

"Come, come, aunty! Come, my good soul, control yourself, don't agitate your young mistress, she is very weak

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from recent illness," said Ardenne, drawing Winny away, and forcing her to sit down in one of the chairs.

"Oh, I knows it, sir!—I knows, Marse Edgar! and jes this minute I *sweared* I wouldn't cry, nor do a thing to sturve her! but soon as I seed her, I couldn't *help* of it—cause you see I nussed her at my own bres', Marse Edgar! and loves her as if she wur my own child,—'deed I don't know the deffunce!—an' when I sees what she done fotch herself to—it—it—it a'mos' breaks my heart!" sobbed the old woman.

"You must not talk that way, Aunt Nerve. I should be entirely contented if grandmother were well, and father reconciled—how is my dear grandmother, Nerve?"

"Yes! you'd a better o' thought o' 'dear grandmother' when you runned away and left her!—and broked her poor ole heart an' fotch a 'sgrace on top o' wedem! Oh! my blessed hebenly Marster, has I fotch you up in the fear ob the debil all your life to see you fetch yourself to this here, Winny Darlin'!"

"Come! come! no more of this, Nerve! I cannot—" said Ardenne, sternly.

"Let her alone! She is honest—she only means to reproach me with disobedience."

"No I didn't, Miss Winny! please my hebenly 'Deemer I didn't mean to say a word to sturve your min', chile, but when I sees what you have fotch yourself to—a heavin' of yourself away on—"

"Nerve, be silent this moment! Aunt Nerve! Edgar, *do* forgive her, she is a poor foolish old body!"

"Oh! my 'vine Marster! jis hear how she talks o' her sponsers in baptism! 'ole foolish body!' arter all the pains I've takin' with her a teachin' of her her duty every night, reg'lar as the night come!"

"Nerve! reproach *me* as much as you please, for your care of me has given you a sort of right to scold, but con-

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fine your reproaches *to me*. And now tell me—how is grandmother?"

"Don't ask me, Miss Winny! ole madam is as bad as ever she can be!"

"Oh no! *not* worse again!"

"N-no! purty much the same! Always creepin' about the room, holdin' on to things like an oneasy speerit, and always a-moanin' arter you!"

Ardenne seeing Winny's face bathed in tears, said in a low voice to Nerve:

"You pretend to love that child, and yet see how you torture her;" and Nerve at last was smitten with compunction and said:

"Hush, Miss Winny! taint no use to take on! You can't ondoe what you've done—to save your *precious* life, indeed you can't! please my hebenly Jesus you can't, chile! Let me take off your bonnet, honey! Tea's is ready. I come up here all the way from Oak Grove to get tea ready for you, so as my baby shouldn't come, first evenin', to a cold home and empty house!"

"But how did you know about our plans, aunty?" inquired Ardenne.

"Why you see, sir, I 'quires of every one I sees from Harper's Ferry 'bout my gal, cause you see, Marse Edgar, I missed her, an' the Bible say—a 'oman never forgets her nussin chile—so *I* couldn't, which proves the Bible to be true!—so when Billy Smilie, the tavern-keeper's son at Harper's Ferry, fetches home the pony, I 'quired arter Miss Winny, an' he telled me how you had rented an' fixed up Pine Cliffs, an' was a goin there this evenin', so first I thought 'good Lord—he gwine carry her to the debil's icy peak?' an' then I thought I'd come here dis evenin' an' make all warm for her—cause you see, Marse Edgar, I nussed her—"

And while she talked the old woman went on arranging the table, filled up the tea-pot, set it on the waiter, put on

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the plate of toast, and set two chairs to the table; and as Edgar led Winny to the head of the table, old Nerve took her place at the back, as she had been accustomed to stand at the back of her master's chair at the head of the table at Oak Grove. After supper Nerve took the tea-things out and washed them up and replaced them in the cupboard. Then, as it was growing dark, she closed the shutters, let down the paper blinds, mended the fire, lighted a candle and placed it on the table between Winny and Edgar, and then said:

"Now, Miss Winny, honey: it's time fur me to be a-walkin', but 'fore I go jes you tell me wha you' an' Marse Edgar s'iled clothes is, so I may get 'em an' take 'em home to wash and iron 'em—I bring 'em back to-morrow, cause you see, honey, I gwine come up here every day an' *do* for you—'deed I am! Don't care what ole marster say! he needn't know every thing!"

"No, Nerve! that must not be! Father would not consent to any such thing as your coming here or doing anything for us if he knew it, and you must do nothing without his knowledge!"

"Now, Miss Winny, see here! you think I such a darned eternal fool as to tear my frock off my back 'bout ole marster's 'fernal nonsense? No indeed! I gwine come see arter my chile!"

"No, Nerve, you must not! we are much obliged to you. Winny feels your kindness, but you must not offend Squire Darling by coming here without his knowledge and permission."

"Kik-kik-kik! (laughing.) You-dem think I gwine send my mortal soul to de debil by 'dulging that forsok ole sinner in his cussed infannelly whims? No, marster! when I sot out to sarve my Jesus, I done broke wid Sam, an' all his child'en. An' I gwine see arter my chile, else how I 'spect my hebenly Marster see arter me?"

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"Please don't speak of my father so, though, Aunt Nerve, but tell me how he is and who mixes his toddy every day?"

"Miss Sina Hinton does."

"God bless Sina! Tell her I say so, Nerve."

"Dunno as I shall! 'for my hebenly Jesus! I don't know what to make o' that there young gall! I don't *indeed!* There ain't one soul on the yeth can do a singly thing with ole marster 'cept 'tis *she*—an' she!—she can twis' him right roun' and roun' her finger same as you win' a string! What a darned etarnal fool a young 'oman *can* make out'n an ole sinner, I pray me blessed Lord! When Miss Sina's long o' him, he haves like a borned simpleton! I 'clare I never see sich a sappy ole noodle in all my days! It makes me right down sorry to see a gemman like him heave his senses away so! And then, ef my lady happins to go to chapel,—or to Red-Stone Hall, case you see she's very thick 'long o' Miss Summerfield, too, ef he ain't like anybody crazy! does nothin' 'tall from mornin' *tell* night but run up an' down the house a swearin' at the niggers and a kickin' of the cats an' dogs—poor innocent dumb creeturs! 'deed, I gwine get a mass said for the 'pose of his soul!—stands more in need of it 'an any soul in purgatory as I knows of! I gwine sprinkle him with holy water first time I ever catches him asleep!"

Soon after this the old woman took her leave, and Winny rousing herself from deep thought, said:

"Edgar! if it were possible for Sina to like my father well enough, I could wish him to marry her! She would console him for the loss of me! She would bring his declining years great comfort!"

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CHAPTER XVI.

LABOR, HOPE AND PATIENCE.

"Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing—
Each day shall see some task begun,
Each evening see it close:
Something attempted—something done,
Shall win a night's repose."

WHETHER it was from the fatigue of her walk, or that the coldness of the mountain air was, as yet, too great a stimulant for her, I know not; but that night, their first at home, Winny coughed all night; and it was near or quite day, when she fell into a deep sleep of complete exhaustion. Even then there was no sleep for Ardenne. Notwithstanding all he spoke, and hoped, and tried to believe, an insufferable anxiety seized and preyed upon his heart. He raised upon his elbow, and watched her by the faint morning light. Both her little arms—so thin and white now!—were thrown up over her head upon the pillow, with that helpless abandon so piteous to see in the *very* weak. Even the deceptive flush had faded from her cheek, and the pale yellow locks, escaped in her restlessness from the little lace cap, clung damp and clammy to the cheek and bosom, bathed with the exhausting "night sweat." Her breathing was distressing, short, quick, interrupted; or, if a long breath *was* drawn, it was emitted like a shuddering sigh, while a spasm of pain would contract the wan face, and a slight convulsion agitate the fragile form. As he watched her sleep of deep prostration, and her painful and spasmodic breathing, Ardenne bitterly reproached himself; but with

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that singular propensity of mind that draws us to analogies even in hours of extreme distress, he thought of the *bird* he had caught and crushed in his hand, through his eagerness to possess it; of the *flower* he had plucked which had withered on his bosom; and he looked upon this poor, fragile, fading human flower, rudely torn from the parent stem, and dying on its bed; and he groaned—he groaned so that had her sleep been other than the profound lethargy of prostrated weakness, it must have awakened her.

He arose, and opening a window at some distance from the bed, to let in the cool, clear morning air, he dressed himself and went down-stairs, leaving her still asleep. He opened the shutters of their parlor—or kitchen, as you will, for it served for both—and began to make a fire. Leaving it blazing and crackling, he took a pail and went to the spring, and, returning, filled the tea-kettle, and set it over the fire.

Ardenne knew more of domestic economy than Winny. The only child of a youthful and widowed mother, he had received the education both of a girl and a boy. And, by the way, I have noticed that by far the most amiable, the most considerate, the most gentle and sympathetic men, where women are concerned, are those brought up from infancy to manhood by widowed mothers. I suppose the reason is plain enough—the early chastening of sorrow,—perhaps early acquaintance with privation, toil and disappointment, and, above all, early and intimate acquaintance with women's peculiar trials. The Angel of Sorrow does not preside over a more beautiful sight than that of a youthful widow and her little son. The mother almost as much of a child as the infant—the infant almost as thoughtful as the mother. The widow's pensive brow has sobered the orphan, and he has left his sports, and stands by her with a grave face—her comfort, confidant and counselor, deeply interested in all her hopes and fears,—thoughtful of

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all their domestic interests—her playmate and her prime minister—her boy and girl at once—for he "helps mother" in all things. He thinks himself quite enough of a man to bring water and wood, and not too much of a man to do any thing a girl might do, if "mother" stands in need of such assistance. And in many other and more complex matters he is more efficient at ten years old than a young man of twenty, who has hung upon his father all his life.

Ardenne had made the coffee when the door noiselessly opened, and Winny appeared, looking wan and weak, but very lovely and loving, in her plain white wrapper and her golden curls.

"I overslept myself, Edgar; indeed I am very sorry and very much ashamed—forgive me, Edgar; and I will try not to be so worthless to-morrow," she said, with a gentle embarrassment, as she approached the table.

Ardenne set down the coffee-pot, and meeting her, folded her to his bosom.

"My pale, morning star! how are you, Winny?"

"I am well—very well—only tired."

"Tired, love?"

"Yes, tired, Edgar—it is so strange! *sleeping* tires me so that I wake up—not refreshed—but prostrated. It seems as if I slept hard, or fast, or laboriously—as if while I slept so heavily, an exhausting process of absorption and evaporation had been going on, that leaves me lighter, thinner, and much weaker than when I went to sleep. It is not pain, or illness of any sort; so you must not look so serious, Edgar; it is only a strange fatigue."

"Winny, my love, you should not have risen so soon; you should have lain longer."

"Oh, Edgar; not for the world. Do you think now that I am such a lazy, good-for-nothing girl, as to take advantage of your goodness, and shift all my duties upon you!"

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But, my love, you err—you are not able now to do any thing, and this is no labor to me," he said, very gently.

She threw herself into his arms, and clasping him tightly, said,

"Oh, Edgar, you have such a *good heart*—such a good, good heart. I wonder where you got it! Surely there never *was* but *one* other such a good heart, *and that I broke!* Oh, Edgar; do not fill my bosom so full of love and joy as to drown every thought of penitence for *that sin!* Oh, Edgar!" she exclaimed, passionately clinging to him, "do you *know* how much I love you? do you know how happy beyond expression you make me? I shall not die! I *cannot* die! I wonder how any one who *loves can* die! Love—such love as I bear you, methinks is immortality; or, if I *could* die, in the midst of all my sin and trouble, it would be with excess of happiness because *you love me*, Edgar!"

Ardenne did not reply to this. He wished to soothe and quiet her, and he only held her still and smoothed her hair. Presently she sat down. After breakfast was over, Winny gathered the cups and saucers together, and said:

"Now I wish to wash them up; but I wonder what Nerve did with the towel?"

Ardenne smiled at her artless awkwardness, and going to the corner cupboard, drew out a drawer at the bottom, and handed her one.

"And now I shall know where to find them, Edgar; and you need not take that trouble again."

After breakfast was cleared, they drew to the fire—the table still between them.

"I am about to put an advertisement in the paper, Winny, for a situation as teacher in *this* county, since you are unwilling to leave it, dear; and accordingly, while Winny leaned upon her elbow looking at him, he penned the following notice:

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"A gentleman, graduate of the University of Virginia, will be pleased to be engaged as Principal of a small, select, Classical and Mathematical School—Assistant-Master in a larger Academy—or visiting tutor in a private family. A situation in this county would be preferred. Satisfactory testimonials can be produced, and prompt attention will be paid to any communication addressed to E. A., Harper's Ferry, Va."

Having finished this—"Now, Winny," he said, "I am going down to Charlestown to put this in—is there any thing I can do for you there, Winny?"

Winny removed from her neck a cross of gold, and holding it toward him, said:

"Yes, Edgar; I want you to dispose of *this* for me. Father has not sent my trunks, you know, and you will remember that I have nothing now but what I wore when I left home—that is, a blue riding-habit, and this thin, Swiss muslin that I wore under it—neither of them proper to wear when engaged in house-work. The changes, Hettie Smilie loaned me when I was sick at her father's house, are of course left there, and so I am in a strait. Take the money for the sale of the cross, Edgar, and give it to Hettie, and ask her to buy me what is put down on this list," said Winny, handing him a little paper.

"But, Winny, keep your cross, love! it is a sacred relic, and we are not at *that* strait yet."

"Uses are more sacred than unproductive relics."

"Well, Winny, you are right, but the 'uses' are not urgent now; keep your cross until they are."

And saying this, and promising to return by noon, Ardenne left the house.

Winny occupied the time of his absence with looking through her new home, and finding out where every thing was placed.

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While waiting the result of his advertisement, Ardenne was not idle. He would rise in the morning, and while Winny was preparing their simple breakfast, he would go out upon the mountain with his gun, and return with a brace of wild fowl. All the forenoon he would read law, seated at a table before the window of their sitting-room, while Winny sewed by his side. In the afternoon he took an axe and went to the pine forest and cut wood to pile up for winter use. Later, he would take his angling-rod and go down to the banks of the Shenandoah to fish, and return with a fine lot. His hopes the first week were very high.

"After all, dear Winny, if you were not the spoiled child of wealth and luxury, this half-savage life would not be amiss."

"Oh! I should like it of all things, if my dearest grandmother were well, my father reconciled, and I could only get rid of this burning pang in my left chest."

Every mail day Ardenne would go down to Harper's Ferry, but in vain. No "communication addressed to E. A., Harper's Ferry, Virginia," was there to claim the promised "prompt attention." At the end of the second week he began to grow very anxious. He kept at work, however, saying cheerfully to Winny—

"There is always something to be done, my dear Winny; and I have observed through life that people waste more time in waiting the result of future contingencies than in any other manner."

Ardenne had laid aside from his small store, a sum of money to pay the bills of the physician and the tavern-keeper. The third week passed and Ardenne received no answer to his advertisement. Then he withdrew it, substituting another without restriction as to place. This was also unsuccessful. Next he advertised for a situation as clerk in a lawyer's office, private secretary to a gentleman, or book-keeper in a store in vain. Those who have no

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necessity for labor, or who find employment sufficient to supply their wants, have no idea of the wearing anxiety of one seeking work from week to week and finding none —while expenses are going on, or a family are suffering. Ardenne was sick at heart—every thing seemed at a stand-still—the world to be stationary. A graveyard sort of quietness seemed to reign over all the scene—at least to him who appeared to be useless and needless to society; still they continued to do "whatever" their hands found "to do."

"For at least, Winny, here is an opportunity of putting this place in complete order," said Ardenne; and between the times of his reading law, he would work at making a wood-house adjoining the cottage and filling it with wood ready cut. Winny, on her part, with the assistance and instruction of Hettie Smilie, the innkeeper's daughter, had made up her own plain dresses and put Ardenne's wardrobe, which was in great disarray, into complete order. Then Hettie said to her:

"If I were you, Mrs. Ardenne—"

"Call me Winny, Hettie."

"I always forget to. If I were you, I would put up some preserves for winter use."

"But they are expensive luxuries, and we do not need them."

"Yes, they *are* expensive luxuries if you put them up with double-refined loaf sugar—pound for pound, like your grandmother used to; but suppose you get the coarse brown sugar, and clarify it yourself, and put up some plums and grapes—that will be cheap; and you will find that often in the winter, when you are not able to get a regular dinner, a cup of tea and bread and butter, with a saucer of preserves, will go very well. So, Mrs. Ardenne, we will go if you please into the forest to-morrow with two baskets and gather some wild grapes, and wild plums also, if any

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are yet to be found; and next day I will show you how to put them up, so as it will cost almost nothing but the work."

And so accordingly they did.

Hettie remained a week with Winny, and then Willie Smilie, her cousin, came for her. Willie had something in a bag on one side of his saddle, which he brought in and set upon the floor—and while Hettie was getting her bonnet, Willie, with many blushes, opened the bag and drew forth—*a stone jar* for putting up preserves, and holding it up, he stammered:

"I was along by Mr. What-his-name's store to-day, and saw this here, and I thought it was *purty*, and so I bought it, like a great many things I don't want, and so—and—so—"

"Oh, hush, Willie, your hypocrisies are as coarse and as easily seen through as a wicker chicken-coop. Mrs. Ardenne, he wants to make you a present of a blue stone jar, and he does not know how to do it. Dear Mrs. Ardenne, *do* take it from him, poor fellow, for with all his rudeness, he is *so* sensitive, that he will never get over it if you hurt his feelings by refusing," added Hettie in a low voice, unheard by her cousin, who blushing purple, had set the jar down in a trepidation.

"Is this for me?" asked Winny, taking it up and looking at Willie.

"Yes, Miss—*ma'am!*" exploded Willie.

"It *is* a nice jar indeed; and will be very useful to me. I wanted just such a one; and I am sure I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Smilie," said Winny, holding up the jar.

Soon after, Willie Smilie, taking Hettie up on the horse behind him, set out for home. That good-hearted, simple-minded Smilie family appeared to be the only friends Ardenne and Winny had left in the world. Not one of her

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former friends had she seen since her marriage. Indeed their neglect was so complete, and seemed so cruel, that but for the simple goodness of the Smilies, the hearts of these young people must have grown sour, bitter and misanthropical toward all the world.

CHAPTER XVII.

WINNY'S REALITIES.

Ah whither now are fled—
Those dreams of greatness? Those unsolid hopes
Of happiness? Those longings after fame?
Those restless cares? Those busy, bustling days?
Those gay-spent, festive nights? Those veering thoughts—
Lost between good and ill—that made thy life?
All now are vanished—virtue sole survives—
Immortal, never-failing friend to man,
Thy guide to happiness on high.—*Thomson.*

I SAID the Smilies *seemed* to be their only friends—that the rest of the world *seemed* to have forgotten them. It was not so exactly. One afternoon, about the first of November, when the weather was already cool upon those bleak heights, Winny having mended her fire, and hung on the kettle for tea, sat knitting before it, and waiting for the return of Edgar, who was out on the rocks with his gun. Suddenly she heard a horse gallop up, and pause before the door; and in another instant the door flew open, and she was in the arms of Harriette Joy.

"Dear, dear Winny, how are you?"

"Dearest Harriette!"

"Oh, Winny, I am so glad to see you."

"Dear Harriette, a hundred thousand thanks for coming!"

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were the exclamations of the two young ladies, as they embraced each other fondly.

"Sit down, Harriette, and let me take your cap and whip."

"How is Edgar, Winny?"

"Well, but careworn."

"And who is with you—any one besides Edgar?" asked Harry, taking off and handing her cap, gloves, etc., to her friend.

"No—no one but Edgar," replied Winny, laying them on a bed in the adjoining chamber.

"What—you do not say that you have no servant. Who waits upon you?"

"Edgar—and *I* wait upon him, also," smiled Winny. But in a moment the smile vanished, and drawing a chair close by the side of Harriette, she said—"Now, Harry, tell me about my dear grandmother—I never hear from her—how is she?"

"Dear Winny, her life and health seem to be stationary—there has been no change for the better or the worse for two months."

"But her state, her state—what is it?"

Harriette then briefly described to Winny the condition of the old lady as the reader knows it to have been.

Winny covered her face with her hands, and wept aloud, and—

"*I* did it. *I* did it. In return for all her tenderness and care—all her self-sacrificing disinterested love for me. *I* have reduced her to a state worse than death."

"No, Winny, it was *not* your work. Don't weep so bitterly; you have enough to trouble you besides that, poor girl."

"Do not pity me, I do not merit it. I do not suffer at all. I never have complained. I never will complain. If I were to suffer very much it would be right. Oh, I am

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worse than a matricide!" exclaimed Winny, between the agonizing sobs that convulsed her whole frame.

Her extreme remorse, her anguish, melted, while it alarmed Harriette. She caressed her, she tried to soothe her, but Winny repulsed her, passionately refusing to be comforted, passionately demanding to suffer and to expiate. Harriette sat looking at her, patiently waiting until the storm should abate; meantime, unnoted by Winny, the tea-kettle boiled over, and Harriette got up and made the tea; then coolly resuming her seat by the side of Winny, she said—

"Now, you have worn yourself out by weeping—*now* will you listen to reason? for there is no reason in your remorse; it is as inordinate as any other unsanctified passion. Now listen to me, Winny—your dear grandmother herself never blames you; never names you, but with love, with prayer for your welfare, with blessing."

"Ah, yes, yes; *but does that make me less guilty?* Does not it make me *more so?* The Saviour on the cross prayed for and blessed his murderers—did *that* make *them* less guilty?"

"Yes, yes, it did—that love—that prayer—that blessing, had *redeeming power*, or it was worthless. But, Winny, dear, don't interrupt me again. I wish to tell you that it was *not* your elopement, but the shock and terror of your father's frantic violence and furious threats, and the dread of its effects upon you, and upon himself, acting upon her feeble frame, that so suddenly overthrew her. Winny, they call me a mad-cap, but I *have got* good sense; and I say to you, do not let your remorse make you faithless to your present duties—that would be worse than useless."

Winny sobbed herself quiet, and then said—

"My father!—how is he?"

"Dear child! grief don't kill whom anger keeps alive. The squire is well, only suffering from a Sina-mania."

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"Nerve told me something of that."

"Yes—it is just *so*—when love or fever seizes a fat old sinner, it is extremely apt to go extremely hard with him. I beg your pardon for speaking so, Winny; but the fact is, you know I rather liked your father myself, so that I am a little mad, and a good deal jealous, at being overlooked for the sake of an unprincipled and meretricious girl like Miss Hinton!"

"For heaven's sake, Harriette! don't talk so of Sina!"

"There it is again! I tell you that those are my settled convictions of Miss Sina Hinton, and you will arrive at the same conclusion in the end. I tell these things to Mrs. Summerfield, but she turns a deaf ear to me. The truth is, because I have overflowing spirits, an exuberant life, and a jesting way of delivering my oracles, people despise them. I will try to grow serious, if it be only to be listened to."

"And aunt Summerfield and Imogene—why, then, do they not send me a kind word, or line? It would come to me grateful as rain to the parched desert," said Winny. "Is it that my gentle aunt Summerfield and my cousin Imogene, my sweet cousin, with her celestial serenity, cherish unkind feelings toward me?"

"No, Winny—they do not—but Mrs. Summerfield feels, perhaps too keenly, the situation of her mother—associates you too painfully with the subject. Then you know, with all her gentleness, Mrs. Summerfield has very rigid ideas of filial duty. I believe that she feels for you a great deal, but that she considers you as undergoing a penalty for error—a penalty with which she has no right to interfere, and which she has no right to alleviate! As for Imogene—I do not know what to make of that lady. She is *so* grave. I was over there yesterday, and as she swept through the room, she paused, and looking at me with her slowly lighting eyes—you know that peculiar expression—as if her soul were returning from a long journey· she said—

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"'Do you ever hear or see of my cousin, Mrs. Ardenne?'

"'No,' replied I.

"'You have never visited her since her marriage?'

"'Never.'

"'Yet you were friends?'

"'Thick as pickpockets—only Winny never took me into her confidence in the affair of her marriage.'

"'Why have you not been to see her, then?'

"'First, because she never invited me, of course—second, because Pine Cliffs is fifteen miles from Sacred Heart, over the worst road on earth, and I have no way of getting there—for uncle Burleigh has sold my palfrey, and put the money in the poor-purse—he ought to have put it in our own, for I don't know a poorer purse than ours.'

"'Then I presume if you could reach her, you would like to see Mrs. Ardenne?'

"'Shouldn't I like to see Winny!'

"'In that case, I will give orders that a palfrey be taken over to Sacred Heart, to remain there for your use, as long as shall be agreeable—good-morning;' and with a quiet, imperial, half-abstracted air, she passed from the room; so that you see, Winny, I owe the pleasure of this visit to Miss Summerfield, at last."

"How I should love my cousin, if she would only let me!"

"There is something so strange about Miss Summerfield—a beautiful solemnity of brow, as of one, who, walking in the light of a high reverence, inspires the same feeling in others. But Winny, dear, I bring you a message from Miss Matty Smilie; she says she thinks that the air of the valley will now be a beneficial change for you, and she wants you to come and stay a week with her."

"That is so kind in her; they are the sweetest family, those dear Smilies; tell her that whether I come or not, I shall feel very grateful for her goodness. Here comes Edgar."

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As Ardenne came in, and not seeing their visitor, kissed Winny, Harriette jumped up and exclaimed, "Me, too, Edgar! you are on my kissing list now!"

"And pray how long is the said list, Miss Harry, that one may know the extent of the compliment?"

"Don't speer questions, Mr. Edgar! Does the extent of the compliment depend upon the *length* of the list?"

"Don't speer questions, Miss Harry! No! but on the *shortness* of it."

"Then I beg you to feel highly flattered, for my kissing list boasts but one name—Winny Ardenne—that is all."

"Then it shall be a variation of that pretty name, Miss Harry," smiled Ardenne, as his lips lighted swiftly upon her half-laughing, half-pouting ones. "There, Harriette; now, whenever you place *another* name upon your list, *erase* mine, for *then* I will never kiss you again," said Edgar, very solemnly.

"Good gracious! what a severe punishment! I'm glad you told me, because kissing is my besetting amiability, I know. But just see, now, the jealous pride of man; now, who, pray, is likely to be put upon my list?"

"Not Colonel Dangerfield?"

The whole tide of blood in Harriette's sanguine body must have swept past her brow to have dyed it such a deep, purplish crimson, as she answered, in a low, determined voice, with an indignant earnestness, emphatic as uncalled for.

"*Never!* And now let me alone, for though I talk nonsense sometimes, I have the faculty of coming to my senses again very quickly. Winny, let me help you out with the table?"

Edgar and Winny seemed very well pleased with Harriette's flash of anger—they exchanged glances—Edgar smiled. The two young ladies then set the table, laid the cloth, and put up the simple supper—item, a saucer of

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Winny's preserved plums. The small party were unusually cheerful.

"You are going to stay all night with us, Harriette?" asked Ardenne, as they gathered around the fire after supper.

"Of course I am, unless that is intended as a hint for me to go home."

"On the contrary, it is only a necessary question, to be answered before I proceed to stable your horse in the wood-shed; also, the precursor to another question, namely, Can you remain with us a fortnight?"

"No, sir."

"I hope to persuade you, notwithstanding. Winny, my dear, to-day I received a proposition from Mr. Hardinge, to go to Washington city and transact some business connected with a claim he has against the Government. He offers to pay my expenses, and remunerate me handsomely for a fortnight's services. So, dear Winny, shall I leave you for a fortnight—and can we persuade Miss Harriette to stay here and keep you company during my absence?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry, jumping up and clapping her hands, with all her short, jetty curls shaking; "Oh! I am so glad! that just suits—like a knife and fork, or the two sides of a pair of shears! I am so glad."

"Then you'll stay, Harriette?"

"Not I! Do you suppose we want to be torn up by the wild-cats, or carried off by runaway negroes? No, indeed! But Winny shall go home with me. I'll stay here to-morrow to help her to get ready. The mild valley air will be good for her at this season, and we will keep her two, three weeks or a month, or an indefinite length of time, with pleasure—and when you come back, Master Edgar, you shall find your 'white rose' blooming freshly." Harriette then, with more sobriety, explained the invitation with which she had been charged, and after some debate it

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was arranged that Harry should stay with them until the third day from that, when Winny should return with her to Sacred Heart, there to remain during the absence of Ardenne.

"Now, Edgar," said Winny, "won't you make a fire in Harriette's room—it is chilly."

This done, Ardenne read the evening chapter in the Bible; and soon after Winny conducted Harriette into the little adjoining bedroom, with its cot-bed covered with a plain white counterpane—with its little pine dressing-table covered with a white cloth, and adorned with a small glass—its little pine washstand, and white basin and pitcher—its two flag-chairs—its one large window, shaded by a white curtain; and lastly, its fireplace, with little andirons, and a cheerful blaze.

"How very nice this little room is—so snug and homelike already. What a nice counterpane and curtains."

"This is *your* room whenever you come to see us, Harriette—it is plain, but I hope you like it."

"Oh! it is sweet."

"It is very cheaply furnished—the whole furniture did not cost fifteen dollars."

"Is that possible?"

"Yes—necessaries are cheap. The cot Edgar made himself. Hettie made the cases of the mattress, bolster and pillows, and Edgar stuffed them—the straw cost nothing. The counterpane you like so well, is nothing but cheap, white cotton, and a fringe around it I netted. Edgar made the little pine-table and the wash-stand; and Hettie and I made the curtain and table-cover; and the two flag-bottom chairs we bought from an old free negro, who makes them for a living. And Hettie and I made this little rag-carpet on the floor."

"It seems to me that this ought to be Hettie's room."

"Oh! you do not know how much that sweet girl has

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done for us, and been to us—a poor simple maiden, with nothing but her goodness of heart—and yet she has been, of all the world, our best friend and greatest benefactor. She has labored with us and for us, and taught me all I really know. I do love Hettie so dearly. Edgar loves her also—and we both say that if ever we grow prosperous, Hettie shall share our prosperity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SACRED HEART COTTAGE.

Please step in
And visit roun' an roun'
There's naught superfluous to gie pain
Or costly to be foun';
Yet 'a is clean.—*Allan Ramsay.*

ARDENNE borrowed two horses to convey himself and his little wife to Sacred Heart, and on the morning of the third day they set out. It was the first ride Winny had had since her marriage, and she enjoyed it vastly. Her spirits rose, and for awhile all her troubles except the latent, ever gnawing *remorse*, were forgotten. It was a bright, clear, cool, morning—the sky was gloriously brilliant, and the sun blazing with insufferable light. The woods rich and gorgeous beyond comparison in their splendidly variegated autumn colors—the burning crimson of the oak, the bright green of the pines and cedars, the purple of the logwood and the golden yellow of the hickory. Winny was a silent worshiper of Nature; and ever when her heart was the most influenced her lips were the mutest. They had a long, delightful journey before them. Ardenne had yielded to

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Hettie Smilie's solicitation, and promised for Winny that they should stop at the ferry and remain until the afternoon. They reached that place about eleven o'clock, and were received with obstreperous demonstrations of joy by Mr. Smilie, who was, poor fellow, as usual, slightly elevated with wine. Hettie took Winny off immediately to a remote and quiet room, and there they dined together. In the afternoon the little party resumed their journey, and about four o'clock crossed the Ridge, and began to descend the little bridle-path leading down the side of the mountain to the small and sheltered glen in which the cottage and church of Sacred Heart were situated. It was a very inviting, a very tempting little place, seen from the mountain path, so protected, so shut in by high mountains all around, so shady, still, and silent. Summer certainly lingered there unwilling to depart—the grass was still fresh, soft and green. Some of the trees still heavy with late fruit. Golden pippins, large, light green nonpariel, and scarlet apples enlivened the orchard grove, while bright yellow October peaches, and large, black English peaches, bore down the branches of the trees almost to the ground. Coming down the mountain path they dismounted, and leaving the horses—they entered the premises by a little gate at the back of the garden and walked on a grassy path between rows of marigolds, red and white crysanthemums, and other gaudy, late fall flowers. This led them through a long arbor covered with a grape vine, and emerging from it they saw Miss Mattie in the covered back porch, very busily engaged in tying up branches of fragrant herbs—horse-mint, sage, balm, tansey, marjorem, &c. She was too busy to notice them at first, but when they stepped upon the porch, she turned around with her pleasant face and her *own* smile, as I said before, *half beatitude, half bonhommie*, and welcomed Winny, then Harriette, and lastly, and with a scarcely perceptible shade of reserve, courtesied to Ardenne,

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as if a nearer approach to familiarity with one of the other sex were unholy as well as forbidden. Then she conducted them into the priest's parlor—a sacred place, shut up generally, but opened upon this and other rare occasions. Soon after this, Ardenne, who was obliged to meet the stage that would pass the ferry at six o'clock, took leave. Winny wept—it was weak, but she could not help it. A first separation, even for a fortnight, seems interminable and intolerable to a young couple who cannot, *as yet*, endure to be apart a day. So Winny sobbed heartily as she watched the progress of Ardenne's horse back up the mountain path—and convulsively after it had disappeared from her sight. Miss Mattie and Harriette tried to console her, but in vain.

"Indeed I know it is foolish," she said. "I am ashamed of it, but I cannot help it; just let it pass; let me have it *all out*, and then I shall be cheerful:" and so it followed. And indeed I do not know who could have been miserable in that clean, cool, quiet, fragrant little home, with Mattie and her benign smile, her meek, serene manners, and her quiet, affectionate ministrations.

"Now, honey, I am going to get tea ready. Which do you like best, tea or coffee, honey?"

"Both, Miss Mattie."

"But which would you rather have, honey?"

"Just which you please, Miss Mattie."

"*Tea*, Miss Mattie," said Harriette, to shorten the colloquy.

"Well, honey, tell me," she asked, as if deprecating the trouble she was giving to have her questions answered—"which now suits your appetite best, biscuits or egg-corn bread, my dear?"

"Either, dear Miss Mattie. *Please* do not put yourself to any trouble; you are so good and kind any way, but *please* don't trouble yourself. I have a good appetite and can eat any thing, especially any thing of your nice cooking."

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"Dear child! My dear child, it's *no* trouble, *indeed* it ain't. It's just as easy to get one thing as another, honey, indeed it is, and you may just as well have what you would like as not; it ain't no worry to me, at all, I always have to get supper, you know."

"Dear Miss Mattie, you are *so good* to me. What makes you so good to me—I don't deserve it," said Winny, embracing the old lady, at which Miss Mattie's serenity *almost* gave way, and she *almost* melted.

"Who could help being good to you, my dear child? but, honey, you did not tell me about the egg-corn-bread?"

"Oh, yes, I like it very much, Miss Mattie."

"Well then, you shall have a nice egg-pone. Now come into your little room, my dear child, and lie down till supper is ready."

And the affectionate old lady led Winny into a little adjoining bed-room, with white-washed walls and bare floor, and two little windows with blue paper blinds, and a little bed with a blue check counterpane. Between the two windows it had also a tall, prim little toilet-table without a cover, and a small glass, surrounded with tiny and cheap colored prints of the Virgin Mary, the saints, apostles, martyrs, etc. And lastly, a small fireplace filled with cedar, and surmounted by a mantelpiece, upon which stood a little plaster cast image of the Virgin and Child. Bunches of fragrant herbs hung drying against the wall, filling the air with their aroma.

"Here now, honey, you can be quiet and rest till tea is ready. Let me help you off with your things. Here is a wrapper to slip on. There—now lie down. Here is a book to read if you cannot sleep. It is 'Paradise and the P*erye*.' Would you like a fire made here?"

"No, I thank you, Miss Mattie, not until night. It is warm enough."

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"I think so too, honey. Well, Harry will call you when supper is ready, honey;" and so saying, the dear old lady left the room.

Miss Mattie's suppers had a temptation. Her humble table was so extremely neat. Her table-cloth so "curd white," her old-fashioned blue china cups and saucers so glistening. Then her tea was so good; her cream so rich; her bread so light; her butter so sweet and fresh; and her preserves so excellent; and, above all, her *welcome* was *so* hearty, her smiles so kindly. It was remarked that every one had an appetite at Mattie's table.

When Harry called Winny out to supper, she found Father Burleigh returned from his afternoon's ride and already in the parlor. He came forward and welcomed her with much kindness, and she sat down to the sociable little tea-table, presided over by Miss Mattie, with her meek though pleasant smile. Winny noticed that Father Burleigh had broken very much, had grown apparently ten years older since she last saw him. His manner was grave, abstracted, yet when observant of any thing going on around him very kind.

"Why have you not been to church, Winny?" he inquired, affectionately.

"Because, Father Burleigh, I have no conveyance, and the road is too long to walk."

"How—what! has not your father?—hum—"

The old man stopped abruptly and fell into thought. Immediately after tea the old priest retired to his study, and Miss Mattie, Winny and Harry gathered around the fire. Here, for the hundredth time, Miss Mattie recounted the story of the ghost she had seen, to a new hearer. To her it was an unexplained mystery still; and Miss Mattie, who had never been credulous till that haunted night, was thenceforth, to the end of her life, a devout believer in the reappearance of disembodied spirits. She concluded her account by saying:

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"And if you please to believe me, my dear child, when Father Burleigh came in out of the graveyard, when that night he went to watch for the ghost, he was pale as ashes, and trembled like he had an ague. I asked him if he seen any thing, and he grew angry, and forbid me ever to speak to him about it, and so I never mentioned of it again; but I shall always think how Father Burleigh seen something."

Winny and Harriette smiled and exchanged glances, fully believing the good old lady to be a victim of her own imagination, both in the matter of the ghost and in the suspicion of the holy father's alarm.

They soon after retired to bed, Harry and Winny occupying the same room. And now, for the first time, Harry had an opportunity of knowing how very ill Winny really was. No sooner had her head touched the pillow, than her cough became troublesome. As hours passed, it grew worse, and Harriet was kept awake all night by the distressing spasmodic coughing of her friend. Toward morning, Winny fell into the same deep, lethargic sleep, and her head, neck, and bosom were bathed in the same profuse night-sweat.

"Winny is dying—her family must know this—something *must* be done, or she will be dead in a few months. I will speak to Mrs. Summerfield; I will go to see Squire Darling, and he *shall* hear reason!" said Harry, as she arose in the morning, and carefully letting down the window-blinds and closing the doors to keep out all noise that might disturb her, she softly left the room and Winny to her morning sleep. The house was kept perfectly quiet, and the breakfast delayed, so that it was very late before Winny awoke, and then she washed and dressed herself in haste, and came out, making her simple apologies for oversleeping herself. Father Burleigh called her to him, and taking her wasted hand, looked tenderly, even remorsefully

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in her wan face, attempted to speak, but dropped the hand and turned away; again recovering himself, he led her to the table.

Winny remained a fortnight at Sacred Heart. During this time she went over to church. She had looked forward to this Sunday as to the day that would give her a sight of her father, or of some member of her Aunt Summerfield's family. Sunday came, and Winny was there, and watched each arrival with sickening anxiety, and without success. Not one member of the Oak Grove or the Red-Stone Hall family appeared. At the end of the service, Winny returned to the cottage, cast down, and almost broken-spirited.

"They know that I am here, and avoid me," she said.

"Never mind, my dear child. Repent of your sins—hope and trust in the Lord, and all will be well," said the tender-hearted Miss Mattie.

"On the Friday morning Ardenne arrived; and on the next day, Saturday, Winny, scarcely at all improved in health, took an affectionate leave of the family at Sacred Heart, and departed for their mountain home. Miss Mattie had filled the saddle-bags with the fine black English peaches and golden pippins; and promised, besides, to send a "cart load" of fruits and vegetables from their orchard and garden to Pine Cliffs.

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CHAPTER XIX.

DONNA QUIXOTE.

Thou medley of contraries!
We trust thee, yet we doubt thee,
Our darkness and our light;
Night would be day without thee,
And day, without thee, night.—*Judge Carlton.*

HARRIETTE JOY kept her promise. As soon as Winny and Ardenne had departed the next day, she jumped on her horse and rode over to Red-Stone Hall. She found Mrs. and Miss Summerfield in the oak-paneled parlor, seated near a cheerful fire, Mrs. Summerfield engaged in tambour-work, and Imogene reading aloud to her from Fenelon, in the original French. Imogene closed her book, and, without rising, bowed gravely to their visitor; while Mrs. Summerfield left her seat, and advanced to welcome her. Harry laid off her hat, and gayly sat down between them; and, while drawing off her gloves, and replying to Mrs. Summerfield's polite inquiries respecting her own and Father Burleigh's health, the merry maiden was more than ever struck by the deep melancholy, hardening at times into a severe gravity, that marked Miss Summerfield's countenance and demeanor. Her very dress seemed only the expression or development of her inner nature; it was so grave and sad—a close-fitting black silk, with a slight edge of fine thread lace at the neck and wrists, its severe simplicity only relieved by the large, glossy, purplish-black ringlets that swept in three heavy divisions down her shoulders and each side of her bosom to her waist. Imogene

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had closed her book, and still holding her fingers between its leaves, she fixed her large still eyes earnestly on those of Harry, and inquired slowly:

"Have you seen Mrs. Ardenne since you were here, Harriette?"

"Yes, Miss Summerfield. I went and brought her home with me, and she remained at Sacred Heart two weeks. She left us this morning."

"She is well?"

"No, Miss Summerfield, very far from it; she is in a decline, if I am any judge of the matter," said Harriette; and then recounted all she knew of Winny's illness, ending by saying that she believed Winny must die, if her heart was not relieved by a reconciliation with her family, her mind from the incessant pressure of anxiety, and her delicate frame from the labor and privations of her present lot. Imogene listened with a grave, set countenance, and made no comment.

"Have you no influence with Squire Darling, Mrs. Summerfield? Can you not persuade him to forgive and receive his daughter and son-in-law?"

"Impossible, Harriette. I should expose myself to insult in making the attempt. If Mrs. Ardenne will leave her husband, and promise never to see him again, she may be received into her father's house, where she must necessarily lead a life of strict seclusion; those are the only terms of reconciliation."

Harriette's face flushed with indignation, and she remained silent for a while; then—

"Have *you*, Miss Summerfield, no power with Squire Darling?"

Imogene lifted her heavy lashes, but before her slow reply was formed, Mrs. Summerfield answered:

"Miss Summerfield must not expose herself to her uncle's violence of temper, Harriette."

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"Very well, then," thought Harry. "Thank God, I have no false refinement to be shocked, and no false pride to be humbled, though it *may* be false courage that prompts me now to

> "'Beard the lion in his den,
> The Douglass in his hall;'

and *I* will wait on Squire Darling myself."

This was Harriette's secret resolution; but she did not express it. Something of a natural, though quiet *hauteur* in the manners both of the elder and the younger lady, ever chilled Harriette into reserve. Soon she took her departure, declining Mrs. Summerfield's invitation to stay to dinner, and turned her horse's head toward Oak Grove.

> "Is this the Hall? The nettle buildeth bowers
> Where loathsome toad and beetle black are seen!
> Are these the chambers? Fed by darkest showers,
> The slimy worm hath o'er them crawling been!
> Is this the home? The owlet's dreary cry
> Unto that asking makes a sad reply."

Nothing could be more dreary than the aspect of Oak Grove, as Harriette approached it. Every thing about the plantation bore testimony to the despairing neglect of its master. It was very evident that Squire Darling no longer rode at morn and eve all over his estate to see with his own eyes that every thing was done properly. It was proved that he no longer heeded his favorite proverb, that "The master's eye doth more work than the servant's hands." Fences were broken; gates down; fields littered; cattle straying; negroes dozing in the blazing Autumn sun: every thing bore marks of indifference and neglect. Harriette's spirits fell, oppressed by the scene.

"At least, though, this shows that he *loves* her still; *mourns* her *absence* still; has no spirit of enterprise without her. Come, courage, I can do something here!"

And Harry opened the gate that admitted her into the

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large, grovelike yard, in the centre of which stood the old gray Hall. But what a dreary change was here! This fine, heavily-shaded lawn, which it used to be the easy task of a score of little negro children to keep perfectly clean and smooth, free alike from litter, weeds, or fallen leaves—this lawn was now grown thickly up with thistles, drying in the Autumn sun, tall Jamestown weeds, rank with ripe poison, and filling all the air with their baleful effluvia, and drifts of dried leaves that rattled and rustled noisily under her horse's hoofs. As yet, she had seen not a single soul beyond the lazy group of negroes she had left in the field, dozing in the hot sun. As she wended her way up the grass-grown walk, a large snake started up before her horse's hoofs, and glided swiftly away. A superstitious awe had been slowly gathering over Harriette's spirit, and now a shock of fear thrilled through her nerves. She looked up at the house. The front doors and windows were all closed. Cobwebs were stretched across those of Winny's deserted rooms; dried leaves had fallen and lodged in them, and the little insect called the Mason had built its house of clay in the corners of the sills. Deserted, desolate, and forlorn, Harriette had not spirits to go up the mildewed stone steps, and ring the rusty bell. She turned her horse's head, and trotted off toward the Quarters to find Nerve—giving a fearful glance behind her, as though she dreaded having been seen from the house. The dreary and forsaken aspect of the place made Harry's nerves tremble as though she were doing some wrong, fearing some discovery, and incurring some punishment. Harry trotted down the hill to the hollow where were situated the Quarters, ten little white cabins each side of the street, with a larger cabin facing down the line at the upper end. This place looked scarcely less lonesome than the house. Here in the doors sat negro women, dawdling over their patching, or old men smoking, or old grannies with the wooly heads of young

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negroes between their knees, engaged with finger and thumd in a nameless work of destruction. Each nodded, or spoke respectfully to Miss Harry as she passed them, and rode up to Uncle Kill's house. Here she jumped off her horse, and, passing the little gate, went in. The front door was open, and gave a view of Nerve within, seated among baskets of apples, and pans, and dishes, engaged in cutting up fruit for drying.

"Come in, Miss Harry, chile, come in. 'Xcuse me for not gettin' up, 'ca'se my lap's full o' parins. Sit down, Miss Harry, honey, sit down. How's the ole gen'l'man, Father Bully, God bless him! Take off your hat, Miss Harry, chile, an' lay it down on table. *Has* you seen any thing o' my poor baby? Wedem heerd how she was staying long o' you. Is she dere yet?"

"She has been staying with us a fortnight, but has now returned home. She is in very bad health, Nerve."

"Poor baby! poor, dear chile! I knowed it. An' I aint been to see her since that first time, 'cause you see, Miss Harry, when ole marster found out how I had been there, he like to a split the shingles off o' top o' the house, and sweared how he'd sell the fuss nigger as tuk the least notice o' her, far as ever horse an' wind could carry them! 'Fore my hebenly Marster, he did, honey! An' he said how he meant to *starve* or *freeze* the ondutiful gal to her senses, or to *death*, one *or* the tother."

"I am going to speak to him about Winny, Nerve."

"I 'vise you not to. You run your head right into a hornet's nest, if you so much as mention her name, let alone plead for her. You better let him alone—he tuk leave o' all sense an' decency. He'll 'sult you quick as wink—'fore my hebenly 'Deemer, will he! You can't do nothin' 'tall wid him. He don't do nothin' but sit in that there house from mornin' *till* night, and *drink* an' *swill;* an' every single thing about the place is going to rack *and* ruin!

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Poor ole man Kill do the best he can—he's oberseer, you know—but Lor'! he can't do nothin 'tall with the niggers, cause you see, when they 'gleets their duty, he t'reatens how he'll 'port them to ole marster; but you know, Miss Harry, if ole marster don't pay no 'tention to his 'ports, how they goin' to min' *his* t'reats?"

"I am sorry to hear he *drinks* so."

"He don't do nothin' 'tall *else* from mornin' *till* night, chile!"

"Well, anyhow, Nerve, I came here for the purpose of seeing him; and I intend to see and to speak to him in Winny's behalf, too!"

"'Fore my hebenly Marster, he'll 'sult you; he will indeed, honey."

"Which way shall I get in, Nerve?—the front part of the house is all shut up."

"Stop, honey! I'll go 'long o' you," said the old woman, pushing the apple parings out of her lap into an old basket, and preparing to accompany Harry.

They left the house, Harry leaving her horse there, and walked toward the Hall. Nerve conducted her in through the back piazza, and stopped to ask her whether she would visit "ole madam" first, or go into the parlor. Harry decided to see the invalid, and the old woman led the way up-stairs, and to the door of Mrs. Darling's room. Then the sound of voices made Nerve pause, and hold up her finger to Harry. It was Sina's voice, in a high key and insolent tone, apparently speaking to the old lady.

"And Nerve shall *not* come up these stairs with her impudent interference, and her awkward blunders, and her mischief-making. If you want any thing done for you, *I'll* do it!"

A low and plaintive reply was made to this rude speech, the only word distinguishable being "Winny."

"You know it is against the orders of Squire Darling to

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send any message, or hold any communication with that young woman, and I am here to see his orders enforced."

"Come, Nerve! Come, my blood is boiling! My heart will burst! Let me in! It is improper, anyhow, to listen—and to such insolence as that! Let me in, Nerve, and stop that indignity, or I shall lose my reason. Burst the door open; seize that impudent girl, and shake the breath out of her body! Let me in, Nerve; for I do not want to forget myself."

Nerve, with an "I-told-you-so" look, opened the door and followed her into the room. The old lady was sitting in her arm chair, the very picture of imbecile suffering. Hariette went to her and spoke very respectfully (purposely omitting to *see* Sina).

"Oh! how do you do, my dear? Did you know that Winny was gone?" she inquired, with an appealing look of grief.

"Yes, I know it—I saw Winny this morning!"

"Did you! did you! Oh, how *is* Winny?"

"She was over at our house—she sent her love to you," replied Harry, evading the question of her health.

"Over to your house! and did not come to see *me!*—Does she know, does Winny know, that I am *helpless*—that I have lost the use of my limbs?"

"Yes, Winny knows it, and grieves about it."

"Tell her *not* to grieve! tell her *not* to grieve—tell Winny I do very *well!* She *mustn't* grieve! she *mustn't* grieve! You mustn't *tell* her any thing to *make* her grieve. I'm sorry now she *knows* I am helpless; but *why* don't Winny come to see me, then?"

"She *wants* to come, but they won't let her."

"*Who* won't? *who* won't? It's *my* house—*my* jointure house! and no one has a right to prevent her! She *shall* come! *tell* her so! *tell* her to come! *I'll see!*" said the old lady, the spirit of her youth flashing fitfully up.

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"Really, Miss Harriette Joy! I shall be forced to request you to leave the room, if you excite Mrs. Darling in this manner!" said Miss Hinton, coming forward.

Harry sprang sharply around, confronting the girl, and flashed upon her a look of such blighting scorn and indignation, that the audacity of the wily girl nearly wilted under it, and she continued more quietly—

"Mrs. Darling cannot bear the least excitement, and the name of Winny—"

"*Mrs. Ardenne*, I presume you mean," said Harry, haughtily.

"Mrs. Ardenne, then," continued Sina, with an imperceptible smile, "is a *forbidden* name in this house!"

Harry fixed her dark eyes, blazing with insufferable light, upon those of Sina Hinton, and extending her arm, pointed to the door, saying:

"Sina Hinton, leave the room! I overheard your conversation before I entered! Leave the room, lest I expose your insolence to Mrs. Summerfield, who will compel you to leave the house!"

Sina Hinton recovered her momentary quailing, and smiling, touched the bell. Harry regarded her with as much surprise as indignation, and something even of admiration. She had changed very much within the last few moments. There was a sort of attraction, glamour, witchcraft, or what not, about that thin, fierce face, that being neither beauty nor goodness, was more fascinating than either—it was unity, power, strength, a diabolical individuality. The bell was answered by a servant, to whom she said:

"Tell your master that I crave his presence for a few moments in this room."

She spoke with an air of assured authority; and the man, bowing with great respect, withdrew to obey her.

"Leave the room, Minerva," was her next order.

And old Nerve, saying to Harriette as she passed—

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"Let us go, Miss Harry, for Sam is going to be riz here directly!" went out.

The step of Squire Darling was heard upon the stairs, and Sina turned her dark, bright face, with its stiletto light gleaming out between the wilderness of black, shining ringlets, with a fierce smile upon Harriette.

The squire entered the room, saying, with a maudlin fondness—

"What does my lightning-bug—what does my little fire-fly—what does my sprite want with me, now?"

His face was flushed, his eyes blood-shot, his step unsteady, and he sunk heavily into a chair.

Harriette saw, and groaned in the spirit.

"Well, what does my little mustard-seed want with me, now?"

"Send that girl from the house!"

"*That girl!—which girl?*" asked the poor man, his inflamed eyes flying around the room, and settling on Harriette. "Oh! that's Miss Harry!—that's little Nimrod!—mustn't send *her* away!"

"Then, Squire Darling, *I* must go," said Miss Hinton, a flush rising to her brow.

"*You! you go!* oh, never—*stop!* I'll send her off! I'll do any thing you tell me to do, Sina! Tell me to march up before the whole congregation—up the altar-steps, and pull Father Burleigh's nose, in the midst of the mass! and I'll do it, my queen of love and beauty! my sovereign! my goddess! What am I to do, now? Put Harry out? Oh, yes! Come, Miss Harry, you must march!—it's an ungentlemanly thing to turn you out, I know; but Sina commands, and Sina must be obeyed! Come, Miss Harry! Right face! forward! march!" exclaimed the monomaniac, coming toward Harriette.

Blushing deeply with shame and indignation—yet too proud to resist, Harriette suffered him to take her arm and lead her to the door, which he closed behind her.

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Poor Harriette! Never was a Donna Quixote more completely unhorsed and discomfited. She had fallen, nearly buried under the ruins of her castle, and such a castle as it had been! All the way, as Harry had ridden to the Hall, she was recollecting Squire Darling as he had been before his daughter's elopement—brave, frank, generous, merry, pure, exceedingly fond of young girls, who could wheedle him out of any thing with a few soft words and smiles;—and Harry had pictured herself—coaxing, wheedling, and caressing him into urbanity and forgiveness, and purchasing Winny's pardon with an infinite number of kisses and coaxes. Poor Harry! and now, instead of her safe, affectionate, fatherly old gentleman, whom it would be a very merit to be fond of, she finds a fallen and sensual old beast, whose very contact was contamination. She could have wept with shame and indignation; but then she thought of her quixotism, and as the comic largely preponderated over the tragic in her happy composition, she laughed outright as she exclaimed—"Never was Donna Quixote so completely discomfited!" Then she sought out her horse, which, you remember, she had left tied at Nerve's gate.

The old woman was sitting at her apple-paring again when Harriette came up.

"Well! Miss Harry, honey! didn't I 'vise you not to go! Didn't I tell you, you'd get 'sulted—now what you goin' do?"

"What am I going to do? I am going straight back to Red-Stone Hall and inform Mrs. Summerfield of all I have seen and heard—*that's* what I going to do!"

"Kik! kik! kik! ain't you got enough yet, Miss Harry? I tell you Mrs. Summerfield can't do nothin' 'tall 'long o' ole marster. Ole marster's his own marster, and Miss Sina's his miss'tess; and Madam Summerfield won't thank you for your news."

"I don't care if she don't! I'll do my duty, and bear

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my testimony, come what will. I declare, if I were Edgar Ardenne, I should get out a writ of lunacy against this old gentleman, and have him confined. *I* could swear to his madness with a safe conscience?"

"Miss Harry! I 'vised you for your good this morning, an' you wouldn't hear to it! You went an' runned your head right into the fire. Now, I 'vises you again, not to say any thing to Mrs. Summerfield. She can't do nothin' 'tall, honey; an' she won't thank you for your news, cause you see nobody likes to hear o' the missbehavement of their own 'lations! Now mind I tell you! please, my blessed heavenly Marster, don't they?"

"But I shall tell Mrs. Summerfield, that she ought to take her mother home with her, where she could be treated with respect and attention."

"'Taint no use, honey. Ole marster ain't goin' to 'sent to it. He keeps ole miss'tess here, for a cloak for Miss Sina. Cause you see, honey, ef ole miss'tess warn't here, Miss Sina couldn't stay. Cause you see, honey, people would talk, and Miss Sina's too deep to let people talk about her. So, you know, chile, Miss Sina ain't a gwine to let her go—an' whatever *she* says is law an' gospel here, as you see yourself."

"I must try though! I must try. It were shameful to be silent, and let that angelic old lady be tormented by a fiend like Sina Hinton.

Now, unfortunately for all concerned, Harriette, instead of going immediately to Red-Stone Hall, and revealing to Mrs. Summerfield what she had witnessed, determined first to inform her uncle, Father Burleigh, and act upon his advice. It was very late in the afternoon when Harriette reached Sacred Heart. The old priest was in his study—and Harriette, after laying off her riding-skirt and hat, and eating a piece of bread and meat—for she was nearly starved—went into his study, and sitting down, recounted all that

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she had seen and heard at Oak Grove. The priest listened with deep gravity, and groan after groan struggled up from his chest, and sigh after sigh broke from his lips as the story progressed—and,

"Where is the end of *one sin*?" he said. "Where is the end of *one sin*?"

"The end of it would be here and now, dear uncle, if you would only go and expose this sinful girl, and use your influence with Mrs. Summerfield in behalf of the suffering old lady; and with Squire Darling, (for I know if he won't listen to anybody else on earth, he will listen to you,) in behalf of his distressed daughter."

"I may not! *must* not interfere, my dear child!" said the priest, with a deep sigh. "As for Mrs. Darling, she is a saint prepared for heaven. May her sorrows be sanctified to her less holy relatives. May she herself have a speedy release. For Winny! 'she has sowed the wind, and must reap the whirlwind.' I can not interfere."

"Well, uncle!" said Harriette, with a look of deep disappointment, "I counted certainly upon *your* assistance in exposing villainy and relieving oppression—but as I have it not, I must try what I can do alone. I shall go to-morrow to Red-Stone Hall, and reveal to Mrs. Summerfield the situation of her mother at Oak Grove."

The priest arose suddenly, and walked up to her, dropped his hand upon her shoulder, and said, sternly:

"You shall do no such thing, Harriette. You shall not interfere by one word."

"I am sorry, uncle; but in this matter, for the first time in my life, I must disobey you."

The countenance of the priest changed frightfully before her—his face grew thin and fierce in its agony, and his eyes struck into hers with a piercing anguish, intolerable to meet—her eyes dropped, and she paled with vague terror, as he said slowly:

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"Girl! you know not what you do. Would you fell the old lady by one blow to the grave? Would you cover Mrs. Summerfield with dishonor? Would you break the proud heart of Imogene? Would you bring *me* to a shameful death? Yes! you have heard aright, Harriette! You may well gaze with those startled eyes! If you would flood a whole family with infamy and horror, offend that fell girl! She is a demon, Harriette; but a demon of transcendant power and malice, nevertheless!"

CHAPTER XX.

IMOGENE.

Thou dwell'st on sorrow's high and barren place,
But round about the mount an angel guard—
Chariots of fire—horses of fire encamp,
To keep thee safe for Heaven!—*Mrs. Ellet.*

When Harriet had taken leave of Red-Stone Hall for her quixotic visit to Oak Grove, she left Mrs. and Miss Summerfield still sitting in the wainscoted parlor. Miss Summerfield did not resume her reading, but after looking steadily at her mother for awhile, she said, in low slow tones:

"Mother, what is your purpose in this affair?"

"To remain inactive, Imogene; I cannot, with any sort of self-respect, again interfere with Squire Darling's method of governing his household. Indeed, Oak Grove is no longer a fit or pleasant place of visiting; and were it not for the duty I owe my mother, and the wish to make Sina Hinton's stay there a little less unpleasant, I should never enter its doors."

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"My mother, do you not see that my uncle—"

"*Squire Darling*, if you please, my dear."

"Mother, *why?*"

"You can scarcely be proud to claim the relationship of that gentleman, Miss Summerfield. You were about to say something, my dear?"

"Mother, do you not perceive that Squire Darling's own evil passions cause all this misery, both at Oak Grove and at the Pines?"

"I see, my dear, that Winny's *disobedience* has caused it all."

"My mother, Winny's disobedience is *irretrievable*—it belongs to the *past*—the squire's resentment is the *present* evil to be overcome. It is leading to general ruin. Mother, his resentment is not without a purpose; he hates Ardenne, and hopes to compel Winny to leave him; his own heart is not pure enough to teach him that she can never do *that*. Winny may perish with want, but she will never leave Edgar."

"And to what does all this talk tend, my daughter?"

"To *this*, my mother: that we must succor and save Winny and Edgar. They are both too young to struggle successfully with such difficulties as now surround them. We must assist them, mother; we must frustrate Squire Darling's plan of freezing and starving Winny *to death*—for *that* will be the chosen alternative."

"Well, I listen to you, my child."

"Let us invite Ardenne and Winny here to spend the Winter; and before Spring, Squire Darling may be reconciled; or, if not, we may hear of some business for Edgar."

"Imogene, my dear, I disapprove of this. I do not like to give aid and succor to a disobedient and rebellious child. Let Winny suffer the penalty of her sin. Until her father pleases to forgive her, she must endure—"

"*Unto death*, mother! You heard what Harriette said.

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Her report agrees with what I heard before from Mattie Smilie, who gained her information from her relatives; *that* was my reason for wishing Harriette to see her. Mother, I have heard you say that threatened consumption is not to be trifled with—that a single week of delay may decide the destiny of the victim, and place a cure beyond the power of medicine! Mother, I cannot so give up my cousin!"

"Imogene, I never thought you loved any one much since your return from school; you have been *so cold.* Least of all did I know of your affection for your cousin."

"Nor did I, mother, until she fell into misfortune!"

"Imogene, my child, have you set your heart upon this matter?"

"Indeed I have, my mother. I desire to have Winny and her husband here."

"Imogene, this is the first boon you ever asked of me, my child: did you know it?"

"No, mother."

"It *is*—and, Imo—darling, it gives me an opportunity of fixing a condition—"

Imogene suddenly raised her large eyes, shooting a quickly piercing glance into her mother's, and then dropped the lids.

"I will invite Winny here, if you confide to me—"

"Mother, mother!" exclaimed Imogene, in a tone of sudden, acute pain, her face growing thin and pale in its anguish.

Mrs. Summerfield also grew pale, but maintained her composure.

"But you must—*must* confide to me that which rests upon your mind, blighting your health, blighting your beauty, darkening your youth, overshadowing my age!"

Imogene, deadly pale, and shuddering in every nerve, arose, reeled, clung to her chair for support, recovered partially, and tottered from the room. Mrs. Summerfield left

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her seat to accompany her daughter, but with a deathlike brow, and frantic, adjuring gesture, Imogene repulsed her.

"Merciful Heaven, *what is this?* *What* but GUILT should hide itself thus from even a *mother's* eyes? *What* sorrow but REMORSE should shrink even from a *mother's* sympathy? But guilt, remorse, for Imogene? Impossible! Oh, would I had never trusted her from home! She was *so* happy, so full of life and light before she left home, none so gay as she. Now what a change! Merciful Heaven, *what does it mean?* Shall I ever know? The slightest notice of her melancholy disturbs her. Any question as to its cause agitates her nearly to death; I must not allude to it again. May the Virgin protect her!"

Such was the mental soliloquy of Mrs. Summerfield, as she resumed her seat and mechanically went on with her tambouring.

When the dinner hour drew on, Imogene reappeared, but with a majestic gravity settled upon her brow that repelled every, even her mother's inquiries and comments. When they had left the table, and were seated again by the fire, Miss Summerfield inquired:

"Will you, my dear mother, send for Ardenne and Winny?"

"Will it make you happy if I do, my darling child?"

"Mother, I desire it above all things."

"I will send for them, then, to-morrow!"

Imogene took her mother's hand and pressed it closely, saying:

"My dearest mother, dismiss anxiety on my account. Believe that there is nothing worse than heart-sickness, as unreasonable as it is unfounded. It must be disease—for life seems to me to be utterly valueless. At times I lose all faith in Heaven, all love for earth, and only pray for unconsciousness—not death—for I do not *live* now!"

"Imogene! you are the envy of the whole Valley; young,

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beautiful, accomplished; an heiress, and betrothed to the most distinguished young man in the State, and yet—"

"I am heart-sick and brain-sick, mother!" Then with a sudden relapse into her old reserve, she said—"I did not mean to trouble you, mother, with my nervousness. I only meant to relieve your anxiety!"

"And you have not done so, Imogene. You are *not* nervous. Some dark secret shadows all your mind—some heavy grief weighs down your head. Imogene—"

The lady had quickly forgotten her resolution of silence upon the subject of her daughter's melancholy, but was recalled to it by the increasing agitation of Miss Summerfield. She suddenly dropped the subject, and recurring to another, said:

"I have given orders for the Yellow chamber, with the adjoining dressing-room, to be prepared for Winny."

"Thank you, dearest mother! You confer a benefit on me, also, in giving me some one to care for and be kind to —I mean some one who, like the poor invalid, my cousin Winny, really needs, really suffers for attention."

The conversation dropped.

Mrs. Summerfield took up her knitting, and Imogene fell into her usual state of cold and dark abstraction. From this she was aroused by the opening of the door, and the announcement of Colonel Dangerfield, who immediately after entered the room.

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CHAPTER XXI.

COLONEL DANGERFIELD.

He takes the hand I give not—nor withhold—
Its pulse nor check'd—nor quickened—calmly cold;
And still he goes unmourned—returns unsought—
And oft when present, absent from my thought;
Oh! hard it is the heart's recoil to bear,
And hide from one—perhaps *another* there!—*Byron.*

COLONEL DANGERFIELD entered the parlor, bowing in his usual grave and stately courtesy. Mrs. Summerfield arose, courtesied and indicated a seat. Imogene nodded gravely without rising. Colonel Dangerfield took the chair on the other side of the fireplace to that where Imogene was seated, and immediately entered into conversation with Mrs. Summerfield, who was seated between them. Colonel Dangerfield was not a gentleman who considered his duty violated if he failed, on coming in, to take a seat by his lady-love; nor was Mrs. Summerfield a lady who thought politeness infringed by remaining in the room during the visit of her daughter's accepted lover. Indeed, all this party seemed to shrink from any thing very *prononcée.* Nor was it until Mrs. Summerfield was summoned from the room by her housekeeper that Colonel Dangerfield, taking Imogene's hand, led her to a distant sofa, seated her, and stood before her with folded arms and severe brow. There was nothing loverlike in his aspect. Imogene's hands lay folded one over the other upon her lap, and her eyes cast down, seemed fixed upon them. He stood there contemplating her full a minute, and then said:

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"Imogene Summerfield, what is the relation supposed to be subsisting between us at this moment?"

She was silent; a sigh or sob fluttered, struggled in her bosom, but did not escape.

"Did you hear my question, Miss Summerfield?"

"I heard it."

"Will it please you to reply?"

"I am your betrothed wife. You do not permit me to forget it!" replied she, without raising her eyes.

"In what light do you consider this engagement, Imogene? Will you be so good as to look at me, Miss Summerfield, when replying to my question?"

Imogene's brow flushed as she raised her eyes, with their slow, returning light, slowly to his face, and fixed them there so steadily, that *his* falcon glance fell before their calm, perusing gaze.

"I inquired, Miss Summerfield, in what light you were pleased to look on our betrothal?"

"I hold it to be sacred, inviolable; at least it shall be so on my side!" answered Imogene, in a tone so grave and firm, with a sigh, involuntary, but so profound, that Colonel Dangerfield frowning darkly, said:

"You say that, Miss Summerfield, with the air of a martyr. I pray you, were your inclinations influenced in the least in this matter?"

"They *were* influenced, Dangerfield. We were betrothed, you know, when I was an infant of five years of age, and you a youth of fifteen. I was early taught, along with the Catechism of the Council of Nice, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments, a love and veneration for you, as one older, wiser, more enlightened and more accomplished than myself, and above all, as one who was destined to be my husband. I had no brother or sister; and except Winny, who lived at a distance from me, no cousin, and I thought only of you."

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"Yet I was absent at the university!"

"But *present* with my thoughts always."

"Well! and then?"

"And then came the seven years of the Revolution! and *I*, child as I was, had my whole soul fired with love of country and of liberty—yes! and admiration of the boy-hero who, at sixteen years of age, threw down his books and seized his musket, and who, at twenty-four, returned, illustrious with military glory, and with the rank he bears now!" replied Imogene, with something of enthusiasm kindling her pale cheek.

"And *then*," said Colonel Dangerfield, bitterly, "when that *boy*,—who in his first battle, and in every subsequent field—in all the trials, privations, and dangers of his campaigns—in hunger and in cold—in vigil and in illness—in battle and in tent—thought only of *one* being—one small girl—a calm, proud, majestic little princess of nature, whose high heart he thought would demand *illustrious* love,—when that boy returned to lay his laurels—few or many—at the feet of the maiden—how did she receive him? You are silent, Imogene; shall *I* answer? She met him with a kindling blush of pride and love on cheek and brow; and when, in his own proper name and person, he offered to renew his betrothal—how did she receive his vows?"

"With pride and joy! With pride and joy, Dangerfield, to be a hero's chosen wife; but with the *love* of a sister, Dangerfield. Alas! alas! *I knew no difference!*"

"What wild words are *these*, Miss Summerfield? You *knew* no difference! Do you *know* a difference?" inquired Colonel Dangerfield, in a severe tone.

Imogene had dropped her face within her open palms, and remained silent.

"Those few bright, glorious days—too bright, too glorious to last. Oh! we might have known them for a phantasmagoria! an illusion! a bright vision vanished. We

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parted, Imogene—you to pass three years at school, for you were but fifteen; I to my estate, left desolate during the war, to occupy the time of your absence with converting that estate into a paradise for your reception. The three years are passed. The full time for the consummation of our marriage is at hand. You return from school—I claim your promise; and now you entreat a delay. I accede. But if I touch your hand it turns cold in mine! Once I pressed a kiss upon your brow that struck a sudden paleness down your cheeks! You reeled—I thought you would have fallen! How is this, Miss Summerfield?"

Imogene arose, trembling, and would have left her seat, but he intercepted her. "Alas, Dangerfield! my hand is yours whenever you claim it. But, oh! listen. Before you take it, you must hear a dark secret! A sin that I have not dared to breathe in the confessional! a sorrow that I have not dared to confide to my mother! and when you have heard this secret, you will cast away this hand with scorn! But not yet. I cannot enter upon it yet. Let me pass, sir. I am ill; fainting! let me pass to my room, Dangerfield. I will leave our destiny in your hands; you shall be the arbiter of mine. I can do no less, nor more. Good-by!" and gliding past him she left the room, leaving him stupefied with astonishment and horror. Recovering himself at last, he took his hat, and leaving an apology with a servant for Mrs. Summerfield, left the house.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE DAY OF REST.

How still the morning of the hallow'd day!
The poor man's day!
The pale mechanic now has leave to breathe
The morning air pure from the city's smoke,
As wandering slowly up the river's banks,
He meditates on Him whose power he marks
In each green tree that proudly spreads the bough,
And in the tiny dew-bent flowers that bloom
Around the roots; and while he thus surveys
With elevated joy each rural charm,
He hopes—yet fears presumption in the hope,
That Heaven may be one Sabbath without end!—*Grahame.*

YES, it is only those who toil six days in the week that feel all the love and mercy shown in the institution of the Sabbath—in the command that makes cessation of toil a *duty—rest* a religious service. Winny's household-work was light enough; yet to *her* delicate frame and sinking health, and unaccustomed muscles, it *was* toil. She had learned from Hettie all that was necessary to know in the conducting of her small *menage*—and now assumed the whole charge of the cooking, washing, house-cleaning and needlework upon herself, and with her fragility and inexperience, it took her all day to get through; and often in the day her frail limbs would fail, her head would swim, and her sight cloud from weakness; but never for weariness—never for pain would Winny pause while any thing remained to be done; and when night came, she would lie down thoroughly exhausted, yet oftentimes too much fatigued and excited to compose herself to sleep, while the

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very idea of the inevitable duty of rising again early in the morning to renew the incessant and now painful daily labor, would appal her weak nerves, and keep her awake. Then that constantly recurring, cruel cough! The first dropping of her weary head upon the pillow seemed to be the signal for its commencement. It would continue all night. At dawn, as usual, she would fall into that heavy sleep and profuse bath of perspiration, while it seemed that a rapid and exhausting process of absorption was going on, and from which she would awake so prostrated that it seemed impossible to get up, and the painful effort required all her little strength and courage. Opiates might have procured her rest; but Ardenne with his ideas about drugs objected to their use, asserting that their beneficial tendency was transient, while their injurious effect was abiding. Then Ardenne believed that a favorable crisis was approaching, which, if well watched and improved, would eventuate in the perfect re-establishment of her health. This was the hope he held out to Winny all the time. And Winny knew also, that the time would come when another claimant would need all her remaining time and care and service. It was now therefore with a wish to improve her time of comparative leisure, that Winny toiled hard to set her house in order. She never complained. Ardenne's lot was hard enough, she said, and he inevitably *saw* enough without her complaints.

But when the blessed Sabbath day dawned, the day that made repose not only a privilege that might be improved, but a duty that must be observed, Winny hailed it with gratitude. There was no cooking done that day except that the kettle was boiled. It is true that she might not be able always to leave the house; but in that case she passed the day reclining her wearied frame upon a little lounge drawn up to the *window*, if the autumn day was warm and bright, to the *fire* if it were otherwise. And

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Ardenne would sit by her side and read, and they would converse. They had, upon some matters, imbibed opposite opinions, or prejudices; and when their opposing prejudices struck, a spark of truth, as from the meeting of flint and steel, would be elicited that would sometimes throw a ray of light into both souls never more to be extinguished. Both said that in this mutual and frank confiding of *all*—even the most hidden and *outre* thoughts, feelings, and experiences—they learned more than from all the books they had read. Thus it ever is between earnest and loving souls, who do not fear to confide to each other their most secret thoughts, opinions, and speculations.

Their home lay in the midst of a glorious scene, more glorious now in this resplendent Autumn weather. Notwithstanding all their privations—beauty and glory—expanded thought—high aspirations must be their portion here.

It was on the day, the Sabbath day, after their return to their mountain home, that Winny, exhausted, not indeed by *work* this time, but by the fatigue of her long ride of the evening previous, lay on her lounge—the little lounge made by Edgar, stuffed by Hettie, and covered with light blue calico by Winny. It was now drawn up to the open window, and Winny lay there half inclining upon a pile of pillows, her long fair curls flowing over them—a coarse plaid shawl thrown over her, half concealing the plain white wrapper she wore. Ardenne was reading by her side, but his eyes continually wandered from his book to her sweet wan face, with its pure white forehead and hollow temples, its serenely arched eyebrows and drooping eyelids—

> "O'er which the violet vein
> Wandering, leaves a tender stain."

The sweet, wan spiritual face, with its transparent fairness and azure shadows, and its look of unconscious but

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angelic patience! If her eyes were ever lifted, they ever smiled in his.

It was a glorious Autumn Sabbath, and a still and solemn brightness flooded with a golden light the gorgeous woods and sky, and both receiving the influence of the time and place—bathed with a spirit of celestial love and beauty, notwithstanding all the wrong, remorse, and woe,—both were happy, for both felt deep as inspiration could dart its rays a still, calm confidence in Omnipotent love and final good! So, reading and communing, loving and worshiping, they passed the heavenly day until the hour of noon, when they took their simple meal of tea, bread and butter, and preserves—and then as Winny was refreshed they strolled out in the glowing forest with its rich and gorgeous foliage of crimson and gold, purple and green, burning in the rays of the afternoon sun. They returned from their walk—merely pausing before re-entering the cottage door to worship the divinity in the setting sun, sinking like a world in a blaze, and lighting up the whole earth and sky with the insufferable glory of a general conflagration.

While standing there they observed two equestrians winding up the mountain path, now hidden by a turn around some projecting rock, now lost in a clump of stunted cedars, now emerging and appearing in the full light—Miss Summerfield, attended by a groom. Miss Summerfield looked well on horseback; she was not a dashing rider like Harriette Joy, nor a swift aerial flyer like Winny had been, but her attitude was erect and easy, her motion slow and majestic. She wore a very dark green habit, and a beaver from which a fall of black ostrich feathers mingled with her raven ringlets. Surprised and deeply pleased to see her cousin, Winny passed her arm into that of Ardenne and went forth to meet her. Imogene leaned down from her saddle and embraced her cousin, who said, with a faltering voice and deep feeling:

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"Oh, Imogene, it is so good in you to come! I am so glad to see you!"

In proof of which gladness Winny "burst out a-crying." Ardenne bowed, but Imogene releasing Winny, held out her hand with a friendly look, and *then* Ardenne shook it cordially, welcoming her to "Pine Cliffs." He led her horse to the block and helped her off, and, taking her arm in his, conducted her into the house.

"I had no idea of the length of this ride, my dear Winny," said Miss Summerfield, as she followed her cousin into the adjoining chamber.

"No, it is deceiving; the distance from Red-Stone to Pine Cliffs is said to be ten miles; but by the winding of the bridle-path in the ascent it makes double that distance. You cannot return to-night. I hope you will not mind the inconvenience of staying with us *one* night. We will make you as comfortable as circumstances will admit," said Winny, while assisting her cousin off with her habit. Imogene looked at her wan, blue, fair face, and fragile, evanescent form, and, in reply, pressed her affectionately to her bosom.

"It will be agreeable to *me*, dear child. I only fear the inconvenience to yourself, Winny. Do you think I kept aloof from you with a *purpose* all this time?"

"Yes, Imogene, I thought so; but I did not presume to judge your actions, far less to blame you. I *felt* that you were right in testifying your disapproval of my step."

"My dear Winny, it was not that. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness;' perhaps I was preoccupied with myself."

It was now Winny's turn to read in that high regal brow characters of profound suffering and stern endurance. It was like a mournful wail of solemn music without the words. Apparent but not comprehensible; speaking to the emotions but not to the understanding. There was something, too, that awed investigation, and Winny's eyes fell. Then:

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"How is my dear grandmother?" she asked, in a low, tremulous voice.

Imogene replied by telling her as much and as far as she knew, or was led to believe; among other things, that Miss Sina Hinton was very good to her—very kind and attentive, night and day—though the unfortunate lady, like many in her sad state, took a prejudice against her best friend, and disliked Miss Hinton. That they could never sufficiently repay Miss Hinton for staying there under all these unpleasant and adverse circumstances.

Winny sunk down in a chair, dropped her head upon the foot of the bed, and gave herself up to the agony of remorse and sorrow that the name of her grandmother, and the idea of her sufferings, always excited.

A glance through the window showed Miss Summerfield that Ardenne was out in the yard, just going off to show the groom where to put the horses, and she turned and addressed herself to comforting Winny.

"Dear child, you confirm what Harriette told me. Your remorse is morbid; it is a disease, and it is killing you. Winny, your very error drew upon you duties, not of regret, remorse, but of a kind that regret and remorse are utterly opposed to and inconsistent with. Do you think that your immoderate remorse for your marriage will promote Edgar's happiness?"

"Oh, no! and I do *not* regret our marriage. No, come what will, in this world or the next, I shall *never* regret our marriage. It is my *disobedience* I repent; its consequences to others I lament."

"Well, for that disobedience you have justly, though severely, suffered and deeply repented. Yet justice has been tempered with mercy; some of its 'consequences' have been as profoundly happy as others have been disastrous. Your very sufferings have severely tested the love of your husband, and you have found it inexhaustible. In that love you

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have been profoundly happy, highly blessed. That love at length is *right now*, is religious *now;* evil may surround it, but cannot touch it, cannot mingle with it. Oh, I have thought of the fall of man, the loss of Eden, and the going forth into the wilderness! And I have felt that the curse was not so great, the loss so heavy, the exile so dreary, after all. It was just the curse that a merciful God, a loving Father, to keep his word, would have inflicted—to save his children, would have softened—*for they were sent forth together with leave to love.* How much more terrible would have been the curse to either, had either retained PARADISE *alone*—had they been *forbidden to love.*"

Winny's eyes were fixed with intense interest upon the solemnly eloquent countenance of Miss Summerfield, and she almost unconsciously exclaimed:

"Imogene, *you* love!"

"*Hush, hush!* I am betrothed—I ought to love," replied she hastily and huskily, growing so very white under the gentle but penetrating scrutiny of her cousin that Winny quickly withdrew her glance. Recovering herself, Miss Summerfield said:

"I wish you to rouse, Winny; the past is irreparable. Fidelity to *present* duties is possible and pressing. Get cheerful and well; look at things broadly and intelligently. Heaven is always repairing the errors, and forgiving the sins, and bringing good from the evil of earth. In the course of this work some have to suffer by the faults and for the good of others; it is the beloved of God who are chosen for this service. God gave his *only Son* for the redemption of the world. How trite that text, but how full of meaning; how broad, how suggestive. It is the best beloved children of Heaven who suffer here for the good of others. If we judge by her divine spirit of love and goodness, our venerable parent is one of those beloved ones; she suffers by, and through, and for others. You, Winny, needed this

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very schooling you are getting. Will you only improve it? My uncle Darling—with all respect be it spoken—I fear needs some severe discipline also. He may not benefit by it. We too often delay all the kind purposes of Heaven toward us—delay, not defeat, for I fully believe in the final triumph of Heaven and of *good*. But Winny, my dear child, I did not come to preach you an afternoon sermon, but to make you a proposition."

"Well, come in to the parlor fire, it is blazing cheerfully now, and then we can talk," replied Winny, leading the way into the next room, setting a chair for Imogene by the fire, and seating herself by her side.

"Where is Edgar?"

"Gone to the spring to get water to fill the tea-kettle," replied Winny, a slight blush of shame (for which she mentally reproached herself) tinging her pale cheek.

"My proposition, Winny. My mother and myself are lonely at Red-Stone, even now, in this fine weather, when there is so much visiting. But soon the winter will be upon us, and the river will be frozen over, enclosing us on three sides, and we shall be *very* lonely. Soon, also, this bleak cliff of yours will be uninhabitable from its exposed situation and the severe cold. So I come in the name of my mother as well as myself to beg that you and Edgar will shut up your house for the Winter and come and visit us until Spring. *Do*, Winny; we should make a snug, happy family there, all of us together. We should be quite independent of our neighbors for society."

Winny took her cousin's hand and pressed it gratefully; then she said, with much feeling expressed in her tone:

"I thank you, Imogene; I am profoundly sensible of your kind and affectionate purpose. Oh, yes, I thank you *earnestly* for your generous proposition and for the delicate manner of making it."

"And you will accept it, my dear cousin?"

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"No!"

"No! Why not? I cannot think you are in earnest."

Winny's cheek slightly flushed; she replied:

"We have nothing left but our self-respect; let us retain that."

"Your self-respect, Winny! What do you mean? Your self-respect compromised by paying us a visit? That is very complimentary to us, my dear Winny."

"Imogene, people do not pay visits, of only ten miles distant, six months long. I thank you, dear Imogene. If any one *could* make indebtedness look like independence, and a benefit received appear an obligation conferred, it is you, with your refined and delicate tact. I am grateful with my whole heart, Imogene, while forced to decline your generous proposal."

"But, my love, you had best consult Ardenne before you give me such a decided answer. He may think differently."

Winny smiled a soft, bright smile, and then she answered slowly:

"You may laugh at the triteness and namby-pambyism of what I am about to say, but Edgar and I have but one mind between us. I have only to listen to my own instincts to hear his sentiments. There comes Edgar, now, with two pails of water in his hands. You might now go to meet him, and make the same proposition to him that you have just made to me. He would feel your goodness and affection deeply as I do, and decline your proposition as firmly as I did."

Miss Summerfield received this decision with a look of deep disappointment. She mused in silence; she was not inclined to yield the point so easily.

"Then how in the world *is* one to be of use to you?" at last she asked.

"By doing every thing to ameliorate our grandmother's situation."

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"We do that, Winny, from another set of motives."

"By reconciling my father."

"We have tried in vain."

"By loving us yourself."

"I do, my dear Winny, with all the heart I have."

The entrance of Ardenne, with the pails, arrested the conversation. Winny arose, filled her little kettle, hung it over the fire, and began to set the table for tea. While she was thus engaged, Miss Summerfield turned to Ardenne and said:

"I shall not return to Red-Stone to-night, Mr. Ardenne. Will you be so good as to send my servant home immediately, that mother may not be uneasy at this unexpected absence; and direct him, Mr. Ardenne, if you please, to return for me early to-morrow morning?"

Ardenne bowed, and withdrew to do her bidding.

In the course of the evening, Imogene renewed and pressed her proposal to Winny in vain. After tea, while Winny was absent in the adjoining bed-chamber, changing the bed-linen and preparing it for Miss Summerfield's occupation, Imogene took the opportunity of speaking to Ardenne apart, on the subject of her cousin's failing health and great debility, and by every argument in her power to persuade him to accept their hospitality for the Winter. Ardenne was affected with grief when she alluded to Winny's declining health, and, *for her* severe toils; he was moved with gratitude when Imogene used every delicate and ingenuous persuasion to induce him to go to Red-Stone, but, in the end, with earnest expressions of gratitude and esteem, he declined the offer, requesting, as his decision was quite final, that it might not be repeated. Imogene's scheme was relinquished very reluctantly.

Soon after breakfast, the next morning, her servant rode up, leading her palfrey, and Miss Summerfield bade goodby to the Ardennes and Pine Cliffs.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

JANUARY AT PINE CLIFFS.

'Tis done! Dread Winter spreads his latest gloom,
And reigns tremendous o'er the conquered year.
How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
His desolate domain.—*Thomson.*

It was the middle of January. The mountains were covered with snow and ice; their gorges glistening with skeleton trees carved in ice; their hollows filled up with hills of snow-drifts; the river far below them, frozen to the bottom, swollen and cracked open; the fields beyond, a vast ocean of snow and ice, rolling off toward the cold, blue horizon, with spectral trees and houses standing here and there. Clouds darkened the sky.

It was on the 15th of January. It had snowed all night. Edgar, leaving Winny in her heavy, morning sleep, descended to the kitchen to open the window-shutters and light the fire. The cold was so intense, that in passing from their bed-chamber to the kitchen, his hands grew numb, heavy, and almost useless. He went to the window to open the shutters; the snow had penetrated through the old shutters, filling up the space between them and the window, and frozen there, excluding every ray of light, and making the room pitch dark. It was impossible to raise the window without shattering the glass, and so Edgar went to the door to open it and admit the light. The snow was drifted and frozen against the door, too, for he had to pull with all his strength two or three times, and

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then, with the last pull, it came violently though heavily open, and then it was still dark, and Edgar knew that a snow-drift had closed up the whole front of the house. There was a back door, but no back window to this kitchen parlor. He went and opened the door, and then turning, saw in front, from sill to ceiling, a shining barricade of frozen snow. It was still snowing, and freezing as it fell. He closed the doors and lighted a candle. Then he proceeded to kindle the fire. By its light you might have seen that our poor boy was frightfully changed. His face was pallid, peaked, haggard; his eyes and cheeks were hollow; the expression of his countenance despairing. He might have been taken for the starved apothecary in Romeo and Juliet. He looked old, and our Edgar was but twenty. So much for a romantic name and a runaway match. I think if his sponsors in baptism had called him Job or Barnabas, or any substantial, respectable, broad-bottomed, upright and downright name, that he never would have grown up a sonnet-scribbler, and eloped with his pretty pupil—but to call him "Edgar!" I could have told them so!

Reader, if you ever heard of an Edgar or an Edwin, who did not let his genius, or his passions, or his demon fly away with him, and who, on the contrary, grew up to be a useful, stout, and well-fed member of society, I shall thank you to let me know it. There is a spell, a charm, a talisman in a name. If you want to make a girl a flirt, call her "Fanny," and the chances will be good. If you want to make her any thing and every thing in turn, and nothing long —a medley of inconsistencies—a chaos of contraries, give her a long string of names, and, I warrant you she will cook you up a sermon or a satire, preach orthodoxy with Isaac Taylor, or scepticism with Shelly; be a nun or a bacchante through life, and having no individuality, no self, no UNITY, at death she will dissolve into her original elements of fire and air, earth and water. But this is a digression.

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Mr. Edgar was neither playing flutes nor writing sonnets. He was just filling the tea-kettle and sweeping the hearth. Alas! just think of "a radiant archangel" sweeping up the hearth! In truth, this was the burnt bottom-crust of their cake of romance. Well, this "burning and shining light," who was going to blaze forth upon the dazzled world with the splendor of a newly-created sun, was just now the master of as dirty a pair of hands as smut, cinders, smoke, and ashes could make, as he beat the little broom against the jambs, when the stair-door opened and Winny appeared, blue and half frozen, though closely wrapped in her coarse plaid shawl. She smiled an affectionate good-morning, and set herself immediately to work at the table. Poor Winny had, in spite of all her promises of reformation, overslept herself so often, that she was ashamed now of attempting an apology. She took a little corn meal and began to mix a cake. The tea-kettle was boiling, and Edgar asked her for the coffee.

"There is *none*, Edgar; the last was used yesterday morning."

"Tea, then; tea would do."

"There is but one making, Edgar; and perhaps we had better save that, in case either of us should be sick."

"It has come at last, then," said he, bitterly, "the time when I see you without the commonest comforts of life, such as every negro enjoys, and see myself without the means of providing them for you."

"Well, Edgar, we are not without the *necessaries* of life. We have *meal* yet; *that* is a comfort."

"Meal, and how much? Tell me *that*, Winny."

"How much? Oh, enough to last us two or three days."

"And *then*, Winny?"

"And then—I do not know *what*, then—that is God's concern, not *ours*—for we have done all we can."

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"Look around, Winny: is there any thing else to sell or barter for meal? Your carpets and quilts, your sofa—every thing gone except one straw bed, a kettle, griddle, and two bowls—and now that we have been married fifteen months, we are reduced to positive penury, within a week, perhaps, of beggary or—"

"*Starvation!* Do people *ever* starve, Edgar?"

"*Yes.*"

"*What*—among their fellow-creatures?"

"Yes; next door to people who are dying of luxurious surfeit."

"I cannot realize it."

"Do you realize that we are half buried in snow, and that this is only the middle of January?"

"Yes; but we have a good fire."

"Do you realize that we have not a cent, and no means of getting a cent!—that we have nothing between us and hunger but a little meal, and that is nearly gone?"

"Well, it is likely we shall be hungry."

"And how long do you think hunger may last before it produces death?"

"I don't know; how long?"

"A few days, perhaps."

"Well, Edgar, that is the Lord's affair. When a case is in extremity, it is exclusively in the Lord's hands. Faith is worth nothing, Edgar, that does not pierce the mystery of death; if we are starved out of earth, which I cannot think likely to happen, the eyes that close here will open in Heaven. I only pray to live till our child is born, and that will not be many days, and then let us all die together. Oh! *together*, Edgar!' I have so much faith, I should not wish you to live here, Edgar, if *I* died. I wish you to go with me to the 'Better Land.'"

By this time the little corn-cake was done, and she put it upon the table. There was no cloth, it had been sold.

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There was only two common plates. They sat down to the table, and Edgar cut the corn bread into four quarters. They ate but little—there was so much despair painted on both countenances. Yet each was sorrowing for *the other*. Ardenne had never spoken so plainly, so roughly almost, as he spoke now, and here was the secret. As soon as the little meal was over, and Winny had cleared the table —an easy task—and they sat down at the fire, she said:

"It is because you have nothing to do, dear Edgar, that makes you feel so despairing. If you were at work, even though it should bring you no remuneration, you would feel better, would you not?"

"Oh, yes; for then I should feel sure I was doing some one a *service*."

"I knew that. But think of this, Edgar. They also serve who *wait*. Learn to labor and *to wait*. To labor is easy, most of us prefer it; but *to wait*, that indeed is difficult. To labor is inspiring, encouraging, life-giving; to wait is depressing, discouraging, apathetic, deathlike. You *labored* hopefully. Learn the harder lesson to WAIT hopefully. We will learn *together*, and see who can be the most patient and hopeful. I am sure you will be, Edgar, for you have been so all this time, only to-day you have failed an instant. It is hard for *me* to sit here with one hand folded over the other, for it tempts me to think myself worthless and dawdling, and impairs my self-respect more than any thing else in my experience. *There* is the difficulty *that* makes it so hard to wait; but what help for it now? My slender—*our* slender wardrobe is all in perfect repair—our house clean and our dishes washed—now, unless some of my neighbors would kindly send me work, what am I to do?—TO WAIT!"

"You have more to do, Winny—*to endure!*"

"*That* is not hard."

"Winny, I have not roughly taken hold of our privations

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this morning without a purpose. My dear Winny, my soul's dearest companion, listen to me. Your father—"

"Well, my father. You are paler than ever, Edgar. You shake as with an ague—what is it? My father—what? oh, what?"

"Your father, Winny, will receive you back—surround you with all the comforts and luxuries of his great wealth if —if you will leave me."

"Why I knew *that* before; may Heaven forgive my father for the thought."

"Winny, you are within a few weeks or days of your confinement. You are as inexperienced as a child, and so am I; but this we both know—that it is a time of suffering and peril, when you will require comforts, friends and tender nursing. And what have you now? an old weather-beaten mountain lodge—a straw bed and a handful of meal."

"And God above, and one dearer than life by my side. Do not fear for me—God is a good father, and Nature a good nursing-mother. I shall do very well."

"Not so, Winny. Without proper care and attention you and your child both may perish. Winny, you must return to your father."

"*Never! never*, Edgar! *Never* to my father! Never *anywhere* without you."

Edgar drew his chair to her side—half embracing her he began a speech too long to report here—full of reason, argument, eloquence and persuasion—yes and *hope*. Her father, he said, might relent with their submission—or he himself might make a fortune somewhere else and return to claim her. In vain; he might as well have talked to the moon as to Winny. She heard him out and then she said:

"Oh, Edgar, when Father Burleigh was setting our fault and its consequences before us—did we not clasp each other's hand and say, 'Whatever comes, we go to meet it *together*?' and did we not feel strong and joyous then?"

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"Ah, we were children then; we had no experience then."

"Ah, but children are truer, if not wiser than adults. Do not let experience make us cowardly or false. It is the very charm, the very soul and life, promise and hope of marriage, when those who love each other dearer than life, feel that whatever comes, they meet it *together*. Ah, Eddie, recollect that when Adam and Eve sinned, and were exiled, they were banished *together*. Oh, Eddie, recollect our very marriage *rites* warn us, that for no vicissitudes of sickness or health, riches or poverty, in this uncertain world, are we to separate—and never, never until DEATH part us—and remember, Edgar, that this august ritual was passed—not by romantic boys and girls, such as *we* were two years ago, when we talked about martyrdom and crucifixion for each other—but by grave, wise, elderly men, inspired by the Spirit of God.

"Winny, my dear child, you are eloquent, but one, one hard, immovable fact, stands against all the eloquence in the world." And Edgar set before her in stronger light than ever, the hardships, perils and agonies that awaited her, greater than ever she had experienced before.

She replied—

"Oh, Eddie, *don't* try to persuade me so, love, *please* don't. Whatever comes, I can bear it. If *you* are with me, I am willing to suffer in every member of my body, except in my poor heart. It is such a weak, faint thing, Eddie, that I fear to strike it. If I leave you, I should strike it a death-blow."

"Winny, I have used argument, persuasion, every means to bring you to consent; now, Winny, I must tell you that it is not a matter that lies in your own will, or at your own choice *at all*. Winny—you SHALL not sacrifice yourself. You MUST return to your father!" said Ardenne, getting up, buttoning up his coat, and standing on the hearth, with his back to the fire, and his hands clenched behind him.

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"By the way, I wonder why men *always* get up, button up their coats, and stand on the hearth, with their backs to the fire, and their hands clasped behind them, whenever they intend to be *very* arbitrary. Is it to button up their resolution and heat their valor? I've seen father do that a thousand times, with variations—for, occasionally, instead of clenching his hands behind him, he'd divide the tails of his coat, and bring them forward over his arms. Men *are* funny people. I wonder what they do it for?" asked Winny, archly.

"I wonder why women ever jest in the face of the gravest crisis?" replied Ardenne; "but you will not evade my purpose so lightly. Winny, do you understand me? I say that you SHALL not kill yourself, and you SHALL return to your father's house."

"Well, now, I like that—that's delivered with quite Bishop-of-Rome-ish authority—as if it were yea and amen—requiring no answer—silent obedience, etc. Now I tell you, Pope Leo Xth will find that the godless heretic, Martin Luther, will do as he pleases—and replies to him, 'I WILL kill myself as much as I please; and I WILL NOT return to my father's house without you.' It is no use, Eddie; tell me to do any thing else, and I will do it—*not this.*"

"That is *always* a woman's reply."

"Perhaps so; you can try me. This is our first quarrel, Eddie—and 'SHALL' and 'WILL NOT' are bandying pretty freely between us—and both our hearts are nearly bursting—not with anger, Eddie, but with sorrowing affection—on *your* side masked with *sternness*—on my side vailed with *levity*—let it cease, dear Eddie. You are dying to fold me to your heart now, as I am fainting to rest there. Kiss me, Eddie; love me; and believe me that I can bear every thing that comes if you can; and I *know* you can. You are courageous in yourself—only fearful in me. I will never oppose your wishes in any thing else, Edgar, nor in *that*

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when you speak it from your heart, but your heart was not in that, Edgar."

What could he do? What would you have done, Mr. Reader?

In truth, Ardenne was almost bereft of his reason. They had struggled, and persevered, and economized. Had done whatsoever their hands found to do, and sought work when it could not be found—had drawn their little expenses down to the smallest minimum—had practiced "industry, economy and temperance," those catholicons for success—unsuccessfully—in short, had lived in a way that would have delighted the heart of "poor Richard"—and still their income and their little stock of personal property month by month diminished, until their house was nearly as bare as a shebelon tree that the locusts have deserted. Ardenne was in despair.

Youth is said to be hopeful, elastic. It is *ignorance* rather, that is elastic, hopeful. Souls that have never been prostrated with disappointment, young or *old* (if such could be), know nothing about it. But let a young head receive a severe shock of disappointment, and there is nothing in life so deathlike as its despair. It is middle age that is hopeful and elastic. Middle age that has seen the sky cloud up too often not to know that it will clear again—that has seen the sun set too many times not to expect its rise—seen the Winter snows too frequently not to anticipate the Spring. But youth, with its intense sensibilities and passionate desires—frost-bitten in the first "winter of our discontent," in despair believes too surely that the bloom of life, and love, and hope, and joy, is killed forever, and knowing nothing of it, cannot be made to believe in another flowering season—

> "Oh! there lie such depths of woe
> In a *young*, blighted spirit! Manhood rears
> A haughty brow, and age has done with tears,
> But youth bows down to misery in amaze
> At the dark cloud o'ermantling its fresh days."

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"To see Winny, so suffering and so patient—*that* was his daily, hourly anguish. The few days following the morning I have described were severely cold. More snow and sleet. It was impossible to leave the mountain top, because the hollows were filled up with hills of snow, through which the tops of stunted trees stuck out like little twigs. It was *not* impossible that they might be buried in the snow, and perish there of cold or hunger. Their little stock of meal had been eked out to the last quart before the weather began to moderate, and the snow to thaw. Edgar had trapped snow birds all the time, and that had helped out their slender stock of provisions. And this was only the twentieth of January, and the two worst snow months were to come. What would become of Winny? Edgar thought and thought, until it seemed his brain must give way; he besought Winny to leave him, but Winny, in every thing else so docile, in this was more stubborn than a mule—*she* could bear what Edgar could. Then in the silent hours of the night, while listening to her hacking cough, he *prayed* God for pardon, for guidance. Then he made a resolution, and carried it into effect. He said nothing to Winny of his intention, but privately wrote a letter to Squire Darling, describing the situation of his wife, his own utter inability to make her comfortable, and imploring her father's sympathy and protection for her. He wrote this letter, and bowed his head and wept, for his pride, his spirit, his *heart* was utterly bowed and broken:

"Talk not of grief till thou hast seen the tears of haughty men!"

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE END OF LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

But here upon this earth beneath,
There's not a spot where thou and I
Together for an hour could breathe!—*Byron.*

"Farewell!"
Oh in that word—that fatal word—howe'er
We promise, hope, believe, there breathes *despair!*—*Byron.*

It was a week from the sending off of the letter. It was the cold gray of an early winter morning. Winny had been coughing and feverish all night, and had at last fallen into that death-like lethargy, for it was scarcely sleep, which had become habitual to her. Ardenne left his pillow, and going to the window, opened the shutters and read a letter. It was Squire Darling's answer. He had received it the evening before, had read it also; and now, by that strange fascination that leads an unfortunate author to con over and over again a review in which he or she is mercilessly hanged, drawn, quartered and dissected, Ardenne read over again this diabolical letter:

"Oak Grove, January 25th, 18—.
"Monday, 12 o'clock, M.

"Mr. Rascal: So, it has turned out exactly as *I* hoped, believed and expected. *You* thought by this time to be leading the debates in our National Congress, pushed on by 'Squire Darling's' influence, no doubt. "The Honorable Edgar Ardenne, H. R.," at the very least, if not "U. S. S." My service to you, the Right Hon. Edgar Ar-

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denne, U. S. S. I have a small claim before your honorable body. Will it please you throw upon it the weight of your influence! Stuff!! How dare you, Mr. Knave, after keeping possession of my daughter more than a year, offer to return her upon my hands? Is *that* your pride? However, I am glad, for the silly fool's sake, that you *have* dared. Enclosed you will find a hundred dollars—take it, and be off with yourself! I shall come to fetch my daughter to-morrow afternoon. See that you do not cross my track, or ever approach my house; for in that case I will shoot you as quickly and with less remorse than I would kill a mad-dog. You are thenceforth to hold no communication with Winny by letter, word or message! You know the *terms*, and you know ME. DARLING."

Edgar read that letter over and over again, though each word stung him to the quick. Then he hastily put together a few clothes, and tied them in a bundle. Then he went below, lighted the fire, and, sitting down, wrote a long and eloquent farewell letter to Winny. Then he enclosed it in the following note to Squire Darling:

"PINE CLIFFS, Jan. 26th, 18—.

"SQUIRE DARLING: Your terms are accepted. Enclosed you will find returned your own enclosure of a hundred dollars, also my farewell letter to Winny. Come for her at twelve. Hand it to her then; for I do not wish her to know of her husband's flight till she is in her father's arms.

EDGAR ARDENNE."

Oh, he would rather have *died*, could his death have availed her, than have written this letter. Death was more welcome than dishonor, and he *felt* dishonored. The Demon of Suicide tempted, and might have triumphed over him, but he thought of Winny's anguish—he thought of his

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mother's early prayers and lessons, he thought of the Scourged and Crucified—and the widow's son, the Christian mother's son, was saved in the hour of his bitter trial, yea, of his "agony and bloody sweat." It is comparatively easy, for it is heroic in all men's eyes, to *die* for the loved! Who will suffer *dishonor* for her?—who will receive the burning smite of *shame* for her?—*no one*, scarcely, for there is no compensation, no consolation; it is the martyrdom without the crown—the sacrifice of *utter, utter loss!* No wonder that great groans, which seemed to have split his heart in their passage, burst from his mouth—no wonder that great drops, which seemed to have started from his brain, rolled down his brow. What an hour of bitterest tribulation it was! How he called on God!—on death! "There is many a crisis in life," says the eloquent Dewey, "when we need a faith like the martyr's to support us. There are hours in life like martyrdom—as full of bitter anguish—as full of utter earthly desolation; in which more than our sinews, in which we feel that our very heart-strings are stretched and lacerated on the rack of affliction; in which life itself loses its value, and we ask to die; in whose dread struggle and agony, life might drop from us and not be minded. Oh! then must our cry, like that of Jesus, go up to the pitying Heavens for help; and nothing but the infinite and immortal can help us!" Such an hour had descended upon Ardenne—the final parting with Winny—*her* sorrows—*his own* degradation—each of these enough to sear his brain—but all combined!—no marvel that spasms convulsed his frame, and heaviest sighs rived his bosom!

The hour of direst misery passed at last—it passed; and when Winny gently opened the stair-door, he turned almost serenely to meet her smile. Winny baked the corn-cake. Both knew it was of *the very last meal*, but neither spoke of it. After breakfast Edgar said:

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"I am going to Harper's Ferry to-day, my dear, to see if I cannot do something."

"Oh! I am glad to hear you say so, Eddie—any thing is better than the apathy you have suffered so many days! When will you be back, dear Edgar?"

"When you see me, love—certainly not to dinner," replied he evasively.

"He has forgotten that we have *no* dinner! I am glad that he *has*," thought Winny—and she questioned him no more. He sat by Winny, his arm half encircling her—he looked at her so tenderly, spoke to her so gently. Winny quietly wondered at a manner that would have been lover-like, had it not been so deeply sad, so nearly solemn—and then he was so pale and rigid at times. Had not Winny been the most guileless of women, she must have suspected something wrong. The hours passed heavily yet swiftly along, like the last hours of a condemned criminal! It was near twelve o'clock! *His* death-hour had come! he *must* go! He arose and drew on his over-coat, took his gloves, his hat—approached her, stood at the back of her chair looking at her.

"How short the days are! it is twelve o'clock already," said Winny, unconscious that she was "dropping the handkerchief."

Edgar started violently—"Good-by, Winny!"

"Good-by, Edgar," replied Winny, carelessly reaching her hand back to him without looking up.

He shuddered—she looked so calm, so unconscious—"Get up, Winny! Oh, come! I want a kiss before I go!" Smilingly Winny stood up, and he caught and strained her to his bosom. "God bless you, my Winny! Good-by! *Oh! good-by!*" and he was gone before the smile had left Winny's lips.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

I could have stemmed misfortune's tide,
And borne the rich one's sneer,
Have braved the haughty glance of pride,
Nor shed a single tear.
I could have smiled on every blow
From life's full quiver thrown,
While I might gaze on thee and know
I should not be "alone."

I could—I think I could have brooked
E'en for a time that thou
Upon my fading face had looked
With less of love than now;
For then I should at least have felt
The sweet hope still my own,
To win thee back, and, whilst I dwelt
On earth, be not "alone."

Nay, dearest, 'tis too much,—this heart
Must break now thou art gone:
It must not be!—we may not part!
I *cannot* live "alone!"—*Mrs. Dinnies.*

WINNY watched him through the window as he picked his way down the precipitous and icy mountain path, until he was lost to her view—then a cloud slowly gathered over her mind—a weight settled on her heart. She struggled against this in vain—blamed herself in vain. "Why, how weak I am—what a baby I am getting to be, to feel thus about Edgar's absence for a few hours—nonsense!" but then she sighed heavily, from a despair she could neither escape nor understand. She walked restlessly about the room—a crumpled letter lay upon the floor—she passed and trod on it several times—at any other time she would have

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stooped and picked it up, for she was an orderly little housekeeper; but now at last she kicked it out of the way and pursued her walk. Restless, restless still, she wandered from the kitchen into the shed, turned over all her little stock of cooking utensils, trying to conquer her depression by seeking some useful employment. They were all right. Then she went up-stairs and overhauled her own and Edgar's slender wardrobe. They were in perfect repair. There was nothing for Winny to do unless she had possessed money to buy new materials to work upon; but now, in tumbling over Edgar's clothes, she missed some of them from a closet that served them as a wardrobe. Far from suspecting the truth, she said: "Ah! poor Edgar, he has secretly taken some of his clothes to sell or to pledge; secretly, because he did not wish to hurt my feelings. What a good heart he has!—oh! a heart where one could lie down in security forever!" Then she came down-stairs. Again the crumpled letter lay in her path, again she kicked it away. Winny thought she had plenty of opportunity now to practice patience, and learn her allotted lesson "TO WAIT," and with something like a newly-kindled love of the work, Winny set herself to the exercise. Noon passed, day waned, Winny grew hungry, and there was nothing to eat; she walked about again restlessly; once more with her little foot twitched that soiled and crumpled, haunting letter out of her path. She sat down at last, fatigued in body, but still restless and active in mind. "Edgar must be here now in a few minutes—I will mend the fire!" and jumping up again, she went to the door and looked out. There was no sign of Edgar yet. But the hill was abrupt just at the top; though unseen, he might be very near. She went into the shed and brought a small armful of dry wood, such as she *could* bring. The fire was very low. She laid down her wood upon the hearth, and looked around for something to start it with. Even waste *paper* was scarce with her.

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Her eyes lighted upon the crumpled letter—she stooped and picked it up, and opened to examine it previous to burning, when a sharp rap at the door startled her, and she dropped the paper; but before she had made a step forward to open the door, it was pushed open, and her stout father, in his brown surtout, furred cap, fox-skin gloves and heavy riding-whip, stood in the middle of the room stamping the snow from his boots and overalls. With an inarticulate cry of joy, Winny's first impulse was to spring forward, but *something* jerked her back, and she stood fixed upon the spot where she had dropped the letter; she tried to speak, but her heart beat too violently; she lost her strength, and tottered off to the nearest chair and sank into it, while still the stout squire stamped and blew, apparently paying more attention to the condition of his overalls, than to his little daughter. With a great effort, with a sudden dart, Winny sprang forward and was at his feet clasping his knees, burying her face against him and gulping out—

"Father! Oh, may the Lord Almighty bless you for coming. Father, forgive me! I *do* love you *so* dearly! Oh! I am so glad to see you! I nearly died of joy to see you—oh! and terror, too! Father! *say* you forgive me! I *know* by your coming that you have pardoned me, dear father; but just say so!"

"Stop, Winny! Let me go, you absurd girl; don't you see you are hindering me from stamping the snow off, and that you are getting it all over yourself. Leave off your nonsense and go and get ready. Well! come! do you *hear* me?"

"Sir?" asked Winny, releasing her father, who immediately threw himself heavily into a chair that creaked under him. "Oh father! dear father! I am so sensible of your goodness—I want to hug you, I want to kiss you and tell you—"

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"Come, Winny; no fiddle-stickiana, if you please! Go and get ready I said."

"*Get ready*, sir?"

"Yes, ready, *ready*, READY! Is *that* distinct enough? and be quick, too, for the sun is nearly down!"

"Ready for *what*, my father?"

"For *what?* Why, for to return with me to Oak Grove, where we will see if we can keep a closer watch on you than we did two years ago, and see if we cannot try to prevent you from running away with any more lackeys."

Winny's pale cheek flushed at this indignity, and withal her face assumed a puzzled and a troubled expression—she did not move of course.

"Come, come! will you hurry? It is a long ride from here to Oak Grove, and we have no moon. I have brought Seafoam, and a stuffed and quilted saddle-cloth for your accommodation. Madam—blood and thunder! Look at you now! You are a pretty object to carry home to Oak Grove, are you not now? Zounds! and the d—l! I have a constitution of iron and adamant to stand the infernal trials you put me to. By the bones of St. Magdalene, mistress, you shall enter a monastery within a few weeks from this, and I will leave every cent of money I have on earth to found a hospital for reformed courtesans! Come! why don't you move?"

Burning shame and indignation struggled with the joy and love Winny had first experienced on seeing her father.

"Well, well! the d—l! how you try my patience! Will you get ready, or will you not?"

"Father! if I understand you as inviting me to Oak Grove, I thank you, but cannot go now. Edgar went to Harper's Ferry this morning, and has not returned yet. I am looking for him every instant;" and as she said that suddenly darted into Winny's heart a terrible fear, lest Ardenne

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should enter while her father was in this insulting mood, and that some scene of violence would ensue. This fear was only instantaneous, however. It was put to a violent death by a cruel certainty.

At the end of her last reply the squire laughed out loud and long. In her shame and confusion, Winny had stooped and picked up the crumpled letter, and was unconsciously turning it about, when she recognized her father's handwriting in the superscription to Ardenne. She nervously opened and saw "Mr. Rascal!" Rapidly devouring the poisonous contents, Winny crumpled it in her hand, grew white as marble, and sank into her chair, while the squire continued his uproarious laughter. All this transpired in a few seconds. At the end of his noise the squire said, while the tears of laughter ran down his fair, rosy cheeks:

"So! you don't know that my knave has run away and left you. Just as I always expected him to do. I knew as long as you were a pretty girl, and a healthy girl, that he would stay with you; but when you came to *this* he would be off! Ha! I might have told you so; and now, if you want further proof—*here!* read his own letter. The skulk asked me to give it to you; and I do it, only because it is a good-by-and-forever affair!"

Winny took the letter, put it in her bosom, and rose up.

"Why don't you read your letter? Where are you going?"

"To get ready."

The words were so hard and curt, the lips so white that spoke them, that Squire Darling squinted at his daughter with something approaching to intelligent scrutiny as she passed out. Very soon she returned in her riding habit and hat. He got up.

"My God, how white and still you are, Winny! A moving statue! Well, I suppose its—its—its—D—— the fellow! Come along."

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He set her in the saddle, seated her comfortably, gave the reins into her cold hands—*pitied* the little hands, but swore to himself that he would not even *press* them—and they rode on down the mountain path. In an hour they reached the foot, and arrived at the level road that lay along the banks of the river.

"Why don't you read your letter *now*? As we go along slowly you have an opportunity."

"I do not care to read it."

"Ha! Is it so? Perhaps you do not care for the knave himself? Is it so, Winny? Say *that*, my child, and you are indeed restored to your father's *heart*, as well as home!"

Winny's blue lips parted over her glistening teeth, but she said nothing. They had now reached the ferry-boat.

"Ride in first, father," said Winny, and Squire Darling rode into the boat, and jumping from his saddle, began to pat and soothe his young horse.

"He is restive, Winny. Afraid of rushing water; afraid of every thing. He would be a fine horse if he were only *spirited;* however, he is scarcely well broken yet. Come in Winny; you need not dismount."

But the color had come back to Winny's cheek, and she turned her horse, stooped, patted, and spoke to him; slightly raised herself in her stirrup, threw out and caught the reins back with a sudden jerk, and sped like lightning down the road toward Harper's Ferry, leaving on the wind a "Good-by, father! I go to Edgar!"

That settled it! First he thought that the horse had run away with her, and had looked after her in fright; but before he could prepare to follow, here comes the wind with its burden, and now he is for a moment spell bound with amazement—now growling.

"Curses on that deceitful huzzy, I say; and curses on all Eve's deceitful brood forever and ever! May the devil fly away with them all: Amen!" And with such speed as

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age and fat could make, he tumbled up into his saddle, and started in pursuit.

On flew Winny on her white horse—a white spirit gleaming through the air—a silver-white cloud driven by the wind.

On trundled the stout squire on his stout horse, lashing and kicking, and jerking and spurring; hallooing, and cursing and swearing—rider and horse all mixed up together in the tumbling struggle forward!

On sped Winny; the gait of her beautiful horse a succession of flying curves so smooth and swift she scarcely felt the motion. She only saw the rosy nostrils in the air, the silky mane blowing, the slender white ankles and jet black hoofs dart out in their lightning semicircles; she only saw the trees and rocks reel past!

"Oh! my lovely spirit-horse! you are *indeed* a spirit, a fairy, my beauty, my pet!" said the silly Winny, in a fever of gratitude to her flying steed.

On rumbled and tumbled and struggled the squire and his roan steed; he and his horse, a red and brown, noisy, discordant chaos—trotting, rearing, jumping, dancing—any thing but going along.

This—devil—of—a—horse! he—has—a—gait—like—a—churn—dasher,—straight—up—and—down—and—*never*—forward!" jumped syllable by syllable from our squire's jolted bosom, as the horse churned him up and down. Then, at a furious jerk at the bit, and plunge of the spurs, his beast sprang forward, reared up, and in a moment our squire was bounced spinning in the air, his stout legs and arms flying; and the next instant his stout form was stretched upon the road several yards ahead, while our horse turned calmly around, and churned up and down tumbling toward home, apparently very well satisfied with his performance.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RACE AND GOAL.

She stands, as stands the stricken deer,
Checked midway in the fearful chase
When bursts upon its eye and ear,
The gaunt gray robber baying near
Between it and its hiding-place—
While still behind, with yell and blow,
Sweeps like a storm the coming foe.—*J. G. Whittier.*

AWAY! away! sped horse and rider, on the wings of lightning. Away! away! like a white meteor glancing through the dark path. She overtook and swept past a carriage too swiftly to see the arms of the Summerfields painted upon its panels. Away! away! as rock and tree, hill and valley whirled, reeled behind. Away! away! toward the western horizon, where the lofty, deep blue mountains swept round half a sphere. Away! away! toward an opening cleft from summit to base of the mountain, which let in a flood of glory from the level sun, long and broad and of blinding light, like an angel's pathway to the earth. This was the distant view of Harper's Ferry, with the setting sun behind. Away! away! she flew up this broad ray of light, that faded before her flying steed as a sunbeam, dimmed by a flying white cloud! She has gained the goal as the sun has set! She has reached Harper's Ferry. She has thrown herself from her horse, and, unheeding the group of low and drinking loafers, filling up the rustic porch, and staring at her, she has darted into the little dark passage—she has run against Hettie, who receives her in her arms—and—she has totally lost the power of utterance,

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while the alarming palpitation of her heart could be felt and almost heard. At length,

"Edgar! Edgar!" she gasped.

"My dear Mrs. Ardenne, come into my room," said Hettie, supporting her fast failing form.

"Edgar! Edgar!"

"My dear Mrs. Ardenne, you—you—you will hurt yourself! You alarm me so much. Father!"

"*Edgar!*"

"Oh, ma'am! dear young lady, don't! Father, I say!"

"EDGAR!"

"Oh, Mrs. Ardenne, he has gone! Did not you know it? He left in the stage for Pittsburg an hour ago. Father! *Father*, I say! come here! Quick! quick! My God! she's dead."

With one long, long, low wail, as of a last harp-string snapped—a last heart-string broken—with the last life dying on its sound, Winny sank slowly over Hettie's arms, and slipped thence to the ground.

"Father! father, I say!" still screamed Hettie, trying to raise the body.

The little round landlord rolled himself in, crying out—

"What the deuce is ailing of you, Hettie, squealing there like a stuck pig?"

"Oh, father! Mrs. Ardenne!"

"Heigh! what? *There—I said so!*"

"She came after him, to stop him!"

"I see that! I ain't blind, Hettie! *I said so! I told him so!* Blowed if I didn't!" said the little fellow, stupid with amazement, notwithstanding.

"Oh, father! *she's dead! she's dead!*"

"No, she ain't; she's in a fainty fit, or a swound. Let me feel her pulse. No pulse! Her temples—no, not a singly beating vein! Put your hand in her bosom, Hettie, and feel if her heart beats."

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"No! no! no! father!" said Hettie, nervously running her hand hither and thither, like a frightened rabbit, in her friend's bosom. "No! father! no! it is as still, as still as *any thing!* Oh, my goodness, *she's dead! she's dead!* Father! don't stand there, leaning on your knees, and staring your eyes out—don't. Help me to carry her in, and lay her on the bed. Don't you *see* she's dead! Why don't you send for the doctor? Don't you see she's dead!" exclaimed Hettie, just as upset and crazed as her father was stupefied.

"No, she is not dead!" said a deep, sweet voice, near the group.

Hettie turned, to see a gentleman in the long frock and square cap of a Catholic clergyman, standing near her.

Just then the carriage that Winny had passed in her mad flight rolled into the yard. The little host, at the sound of wheels, and by the force of habit, started up to go and meet it, but checked the impulse, and would have raised Winny in his arms, but that the gentleman who had last spoken, now said—

"Go meet your new guests, Mr. Smilie, I will attend this young lady;" and raising her lightly, he looked to Hettie for direction.

"This way, sir," said Hettie, leading the way into a little chamber.

"Indeed, he is the very image of Miss Summerfield! He looks enough like Miss Summerfield to be her father," said Hettie to herself, as she gazed at the stranger, unconsciously, with such intensity that he fixed his large shadowy eyes, with their slowly returning light, upon her an instant, and then gave his attention to the recovering of the poor one prostrate before him.

In the mean time Mr. Smilie had gone into the yard to receive the new arrival just as the carriage stopped. The footman jumped off, opened the door, let down the steps, and assisted Mrs. Summerfield to alight. Cap in hand, and bowing low, my little host rolled forward to meet her.

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"Is Mr. Vellemont here, sir?"

"Not as I know of, madam. A strange gentleman—a priest, is here—just this instant appeared—and that's all I know of him—don't know how he came, nor where he came from, nor what his name is—he may be the gentleman in question. Walk in, madam. Here, Hettie, my child!" *That* call was mechanical also. The little host always made an ostentatious show of calling out—"Here, Hettie, my daughter," whenever the arrival of ladies or a lady gave him an excuse so to do—as if he were always proud of having a "Hettie, my daughter," to sing after.

"Where is Mr. Vellemont? Let him know that I am here," said Mrs. Summerfield, when she reached the parlor.

"Yes, madam! yes!—you mean the gentleman I told you of?"

"Certainly! Mr. Vellemont, the priest, who has been appointed to assist Father Burleigh, who is too infirm to perform his duties any longer."

"Oh, yes, madam. I see! Will you, madam, have your horses taken from the carriage?"

"No, Smilie, I return immediately to Red-Stone, having come only to meet and fetch over Mr. Vellemont."

"Yes, madam. There is another person here, who—"

"Hurry, Smilie, if you please; it is late."

"Yes, yes, ma'am; yes;" smiled the obliging little host, hastening out to do her bidding.

Winny was at length shocked from her insensibility by a fierce, riving pang, like forked and scattering lightning—followed by another and another, in maddening strength and rapidity, until her senses were again whirled away, and lost in this ghastly storm of physical agony! Then followed a sense of sudden relief—exhaustion; then lethargy—death—annihilation. From this trance she awoke at last with a feeling of benign repose—of inexpressible, exquisite,

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ineffable ease. The soft, elastic swells of a down-bed and pillows embraced her fragile form. A subdued, an even light fell sweetly on her eyes. A gently reviving fragrance filled the room. The soothing murmur of distant waters was heard. And all—the shaded light—the delicate fragrance—the murmuring sound—all came subdued to the senses of her who lay there half lost in a bathos of ineffable delight. She awoke to a sense of almost voluptuous repose—to a quiet, delicious, animal life; she was like a new-born babe, waking from its first sleep in its soft cradle—thought, memory, reason, had not stirred yet. She had not moved yet, though her sweet blue eyes were half open, and floating in the shade of a vague, luxurious vision. This was beatitude. In this dreamy heaven of soft support, of shade, of murmur, and of faint fragrance, she was now conscious of somthing more tangible than either; it was a touch, a warmth—a gentle, but thrilling clasp upon her left hand, that lay upon the counterpane. She felt that this touch had brought her back from death—that this warmth had given life; this gentle clasp had galvanized her deadened nerves, and started her still blood into circulation again; that the little sinews of her small arm were delicate electric wires, conducting the life of that touch to heart and brain, and waking them to consciousness. She was awake now—life was upon her again—the world before her once more! But she received it with the feebleness of a young infant. She turned her swimming glance—the dark, shrouded figure, and pale, spiritual face of the silent watcher did not cause her either surprise or joy; she was too weak to feel either—to feel any thing but affection, as she murmured, in a soft, low tone—

"Grandmother."

"What, my baby?" replied the watcher, catching to the side of the bed, and helping herself up, and bending over a face full of simple love, upon the languid one.

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Both seemed too feeble, in mind and body, one from illness, one from age, to feel any strong emotion at this meeting.

"Grandmother."

"Well, honey?"

"Is this you?"

"Yes, honey; this is me."

"Kiss me, grandmother."

"Yes, honey;" and the old lady bent over and pressed a kiss on her lips.

"Bless me, grandmother."

"God love my baby."

"Now I'll go to sleep," and she closed her eyes again, to open them shortly.

"Grandmother."

"What, honey?"

"Am I awake, or asleep?"

"I think you are awake, honey; ain't you?"

"Yes, I reckon so—but where am I?"

"In Margaret's room, honey."

"Where?"

"In Margaret's room, you know, honey."

"At Red-Stone Hall?"

"Yes, honey."

"Well, good-night, grandmother—I am going to sleep now;" and a second time she closed her eyes, and dream and reality mingled together in her vague consciousness. Presently she awoke again; it was dark now, except where a feeble yellow ray from the hearth showed where the night taper burned. She murmured—"Grandmother."

"Do you want any thing, dear Winny?"

"Who spoke?"

"I, your cousin Imogene; how do you feel, Winny?"

"So nice."

"I am so glad—can you eat something now, dear?"

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"Imogene!"

"Well, my cousin?"

"Was grandmother here just now, or was it a pleasant dream?"

"She was here just now. We sent the carriage for her as soon as you arrived. We knew that we could induce her to come, *at last*, if she heard that you were here."

"Where is grandmother?"

"She has been sitting by you all day; but now we have persuaded her to go to bed, and let me take her place by *your* bedside."

"Where is Edgar, Imogene?"

No voice answered, nor was the question now repeated. After a few moments—

"Will you take any thing, dearest Winny?"

"I—I want Edgar to come to me so much—tell him to come."

No voice replied for some seconds, and then—

"I do not know where he is, Winny."

"Send some one to look, then."

"*Where did you leave him, Winny?*"

The feeble one evidently struggled for clearer memory—she struggled into recollection — shuddered — groaned. Imogene stooped over her.

"Winny! will you look at your child — your little daughter?"

Now the full light of memory and understanding broke broadly upon Winny, and she remembered and knew all!

"Dear Winny, will you look at your little daughter?"

"Yes—yes—yes," sighed Winny.

Imogene lifted her gently up—supporting her little shoulders by piling pillows behind her. Then she went to a crib near by, and lifting a light burden from it, came and laid it on the bed before the youthful mother. She unwrapped the flannel wrappers, displaying the little silky black hair,

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folded features, shut up fast in sleep—the little hands, folded together and pressed under the chin—the embodiment of perfect innocence with perfect helplessness. Winny gazed on her child a long time, with her thin hands clasped together, in perfect silence, until the tears began to gather in her eyes, and to roll down her face. Faster and faster they gathered and fell—faster and faster—until Imogene said—

"Do not weep so, dearest Winny!"

She attempted to reply—she failed in utterance, shook her head, while the tears poured from her eyes. They fell upon the baby's face, who lifted its silky lashes, and the large, sad eyes of Edgar Ardenne gazed unconsciously at her from the face of her child.

"Your tears are not all bitter, young mother, you have a great comfort there," said the deep, melodious voice of Imogene.

The babe began to move uneasily, and then Imogene again spoke—

"You have an exquisite joy at hand, Winny—do you know it? You must nurse your baby—she needs it now. Take her to your bosom, Winny. Ah, Winny, surely this is a profound happiness. Do not weep. God is bending from the skies, and looking at us, while I place the baby he has sent you, in your arms. Be grateful—be hopeful; lift your eyes, and lift your heart, and thank him for the sweet gift, as you lay it to your bosom."

Winny received the child in silence; she had not spoken one word since her full memory returned. If now she experienced the profound joys of maternity, it was so *deepened*, so blended with sorrow, remorse and despair, that not one faint smile, not one ray of pleasure, lighted her features. She was very quiet. She did not shudder, or groan, or even sigh, now. Her tears, when they fell, rolled silently down her cheeks. Poor child! she had missed the joy of

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the two sweetest epochs in her life—her bridal and her maternity—both had been darkened and saddened by the sternest sorrow.

Several days passed, in which Winny could scarcely be said to live—she was so still, pale, apathetic. She never testified the least surprise at finding herself where she was, the least gratitude for Mrs. and Miss Summerfield's kindness, or the least pleasure at the reunion with her grandmother; she ate so little that they gave her copious doses of elixir vitriol to stimulate the needful appetite—she received the medicine half unconsciously, and took her meals mechanically. The only signs of sanity she ever gave were the still tears of profound tenderness and sorrow she would drop upon her babe—the glance of regretful affection she would cast on her grandmother, or the wistful inquiring gaze she would sometimes fix upon Miss Summerfield's pallid brow and haggard face. It was in vain they tried to interest her in passing events, or to engage her in conversation—evil and good came alike—only she would shiver at a burst of sunshine, shudder at a peal of laughter. Sometimes Imogene would attempt to read to her; but it was only the profound and elevating—the strong and life-giving thoughts of those who had suffered and outlived and sanctified to themselves sorrows deep as hers.

One morning, while they sat together in the chamber appropriated to Winny's use, Imogene's melodious and saddened voice was heard adding its "music" to the following beautiful words: "And now, as thou sittest there, I will speak to thee; and I say, though sighs will burst from thy almost broken heart, yet when they come back in echoes from the silent walls, let them teach thee. Let them tell thee that God wills not thy destruction, thy suffering for its own sake; wills thee not—cannot will thee any evil; how can that thought come from the bosom of Infinite love? No, let thy sorrows tell thee that God wills

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thy repentance, thy virtue, thy happiness, thy preparation for infinite happiness! Let that thought spread holy light through thy darkened chamber. That which is against thee is not as that which is for thee Calamity, a dark speck in thy sky, seemeth to be against thee; but God's goodness, the all-embracing light and power of the universe, forever lives and shines around thee and for thee.

"'Evil and good before Him stand.
Their missions to perform.'

The angel of gladness is there; but the angel of affliction is there, too; and both alike for good. May the angel of gladness visit us as often as is good for us! I pray for it. But that angel of affliction!—what shall we say to it? Shall we not say, 'Come thou, too, when our Father willeth; come thou when need is; with saddened brow and pitying eye, come, and take us on thy wings, and bear us up to hope, to happiness, to heaven; to that presence where is fullness of joy, to that right hand where there are pleasures forever more!'"

Long, long had Winny's tears been frozen; now, at this sun of sympathy, eloquence, inspiration, they melted and ran down her face. Still her attention was not fixed—only arrested—unsettled and wandering in sad reveries and fancies, for, turning her tear-bathed face to Imogene, she murmured:

"Are *you* then that Angel of Sorrow 'with saddened brow and pitying eye?' Are you that Angel of Sorrow who presided at my marriage and presided over my maternity—I do not say 'Come,' but 'Depart from me, Angel of Sorrow, for the shadow of your wing hides from me the face of God!'"

One day, in a more rational and practical mood, she asked—

"Imogene—was no effort made to recall him? I mean—

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because I was so ill—so near death, Imogene, and you were so good!"

"My dear, yes. We wrote to Wheeling by the very next mail, and thinking that perhaps he might not get the letter soon enough, did not wait the next stage, but dispatched a messenger on horseback to Wheeling for him. However, before our messenger arrived he had left Wheeling, no one knew whither."

"And so you abandoned the chase?"

"Yes, my dear Winny, but not the purpose. My mother caused notices to be inserted in all the papers throughout the country to 'E——r A——e, late of Jefferson County, Va.,' recalling him on important business. As yet, Winny, these notices have been unproductive. However, only a few weeks have passed as yet. The notices are to be continued until further orders; and he cannot fail to meet one or more of them."

"Unless he has lost himself in the boundless Western wilderness: which is the most likely of all."

There was a coldness and quietness in her tone and manner that proved Winny was not herself yet.

"He was crazy, Imogene; mad, maddened by seeing *my* privations and fearing for *me*—or he would not have thrown me into worse affliction by flying."

To turn her thoughts away, Miss Summerfield said:

"Your father is much better, Winny."

No answer.

"I told you several times that, in pursuing you, he had been thrown from his horse and severely injured."

No answer.

"Are you not glad he is recovered, my dear?"

"No."

"*What*, Winny; not glad to hear your father is better?"

"No."

"You shock me, Winny!"

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"You should not have asked me, then. My father took my heart between his large strong hands and pressed it until it was numb. At first I screamed with the pain, but now I feel no more—it is numb! Indeed it is, Imogene—it is strange—but it is numb, stunned, silent!"

While even they spoke, old Gelly entered with a letter in her hand.

"Mornin' Miss Winny—how you do to-day? Here's a letter from ole marster. Uncle Killus is down-stairs long o' de carriage as the old gent'lum sont. He's come to carry you back long o' him. Ole marster has been very bad, Killus says—he's demented, too, of all his sins—he says—done had priest Bellmont long o' him night an' day—ef any man could pervert a sinner from the arrows of his course, it is priest Bellmont. Killus says how he would only give him dissolution on certain perditions—an' Killus says how it war something 'cerning Marse Edgar and Miss Winny, an' somethin' bout marryin' of Miss Sina Hinton."

"Be careful, Angela, you talk at random! and for Achilles, I suppose he has been at his old tricks of listening at keyholes, and adding to all that he hears there!"

"Yes, honey. Well, honey, I hope it's true—that's all. Now, Miss Winny, when you done a readin' of your letter jes ring de bell an' let some of them lazy trollopes come an' 'tend to you—I got to go an' give out dinner."

"Did you say uncle Kill was down-stairs?"

"Yes, honey."

"Tell him to come up."

"Yes, honey."

And the old woman left the room. Winny's eyes fell again upon the letter in her hands. It ran thus:—

"*Oak Grove, March 1st*, 18—.

"Winny, my child! How are you, my dear child? Your baby is six weeks old—are you well enough to come

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to me? I have sent the large close carriage with the down pillows and eider-down comforter that was your mother's. I have had your mother's room fixed up for you very nicely—and I have engaged your favorite, Hettie Smilie, here as your companion. Hettie has thought of every thing that I had forgotten. That beautiful satin-wood crib that was your grandmother's, and then your mother's, is placed by your bed. You shall have your choice of all the young mulatto girls on the plantation as a nurse for your child. I shall have a garden-chair for you to take exercise in until you are able to ride out every day. I would send Hettie to ride home with you, only you will need to lie down in the carriage, and there is no more than enough room for the pillows, yourself and baby. I would come for you myself, my child, but I am as yet unable to leave my chair. I have been very ill, my child! very, very ill—at death's door—yes, *at death's door*, Winny! I am so strong in constitution, and always had such robust health, that I did not know what it was to face death until it came. Come to me, my child. I hold out my arms to you. I want to hug my little yellow-haired girl again.

"Your father, grieving for you,

"JARED DARLING."

If you had seen the face of Winny as she read this letter—the strange, cold, sardonic smile that *quivered* on her lips, you might have guessed what a frightful WRONG had wrought in her angel disposition. She opened the sheet, and turning the blank page, asked Imogene to lend her her pencil—and Miss Summerfield, taking the gold pencil from her belt, handed it to Winny, watching with uneasiness the frosty smile upon the girl's lips as she wrote. Winny finished her note, written with a pencil on the reverse side of her father's letter, and folding, directed it. She laid it down on the corner of the dressing-table ready for Kill. Imogene took it up.

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"May I read it, Winny?"

She nodded an indifferent assent. Imogene's sentiment of reverence made her shudder as she read—

"When you have found and restored to me the life of my life, my husband—when you will extend to him an equal welcome with myself—then I will come to you, and not *till* then. You need send no more letters, for I will receive none from you except through the hands of Edgar Ardenne. '*You know the terms—know me.*'

"WINNY ARDENNE."

"Horrible! most horrible! Winny, nothing, *nothing* that your father could have done to you or your husband should have provoked you to write a note like that!"

"I am not provoked. I wrote a cold fact."

"This note shall not go," said Miss Summerfield, slowly tearing it up.

"You will have to reply to Squire Darling, then, for *I* can write no other letter; for any other letter would be false."

"Then I will reply to my uncle's note;" and going to her room, Imogene wrote the following:—

"DEAR SIR: Mrs. Ardenne, though much better and still improving, is not in a condition to come to you. We hope she will be in a few days; her child is well and grows finely. We hope to see you at Red-Stone Hall as soon as your convalescence will permit it.

"Very respectfully,

"I. SUMMERFIELD."

"*Monday morning.*"

Sealing this letter, Imogene returned to Winny's chamber. She found her in conversation with old Kill, who was

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almost crying for delight at again seeing "Miss Winny." He received the note from Miss Summerfield, and turning to Winny said:

"Now, Miss Winny, honey, what must I tell old marster *you* say?"

"Miss Summerfield has answered your master's note, uncle."

"Hey?—yes—sure 'nough I knows that, but *you*, honey. What must I tell him *you* say to ole marster?"

"Nothing."

"Nothin'—he'! how that?"

"You must go now, Achilles; Mrs. Ardenne must lie down."

"Yes, honey, yes, yes, chile. I only waitin' for her say somethin' for me to tell to old marster."

"The note has every thing, Achilles."

"Yes, honey, yes, yes, I knows that too. I only waitin'—"

"Will you do as I desire, Achilles?" said Miss Summerfield, with that invincible air of haughtiness and authority which she sometimes, but very seldom, assumed. Old Kill bowed lowly, turned around hesitatingly, and left the chamber.

"Now, Winny," said Miss Summerfield, when she had dismissed the old man, "now, Winny, recline on this lounge, while I sit here and talk to you. Do you intend to cultivate that sort of spirit toward your father?"

"I do not cultivate it. He drove Edgar, poor Edgar, who was so young, *mad*, and to an *act* of madness; *never* in his senses would he have left me. I feel, as I said—or to speak more truly, I have *ceased to feel*—as I told you before. I cannot help it."

"Winny," said she, passing her hand once or twice across her brow, as though she was conscious of speaking as much of herself as of another; "Winny, it is difficult to govern

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thought; nearly impossible to govern *feeling;* but ACTION is, with few exceptions, entirely under our control. You cannot, perhaps, at once conquer and expel that impious feeling of resentment."

"It is not resentment, it is no feeling at all."

"It is the *result* of resentment, however. Well, then, you cannot force a filial affection that you do not feel, and it would be wrong to affect what has no existence; but, Winny, you can pay your father filial attention and duty, still. You can, as soon as you are able, return to his house."

"Imogene, if I weary you, I can return to my mountain cabin."

"We have not deserved that at your lips, cousin."

"Well, then, do not speak to me of returning to my father's house. Imogene, look at me. I am not the same being that I was two months ago, yet you talk to me without regard to the revolution in which I have lost my individuality. I once told you I loved this earth better than Heaven, that I always wished to stay just here on earth, and never wished a better heaven. I love this earth no longer. I wonder how I ever thought it fair. It is hideous! it is horrible! a place of clouds and storms—of floods and earthquakes! The very boasted sunshine is nothing but a scorching heat, or a blinding light. I loathe the sight of Nature—I shut it out. LIFE!! Once I said I *loved* life above all things—now I *hate* it above all things! It is full of disease and sin, of pain and sorrow, of persecution and suffering, of crime and remorse. Oh! it is full—brimful, and running over of agony of body and anguish of mind! Oh! I loathe it—take it from me. Give me the peace of nonentity."

"'The peace of nonentity,'" replied Imogene, as though she too, were tempted to sigh for it. "But, dearest Winny, *you* are not changed, only your *environments.* The earth

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is the same at midnight that it was at noon, only the light is gone. Night has darkened all your spirits, Winny, but *you* are not changed."

"Am I not? Listen. You know—for you have heard it from others—that I carry in my bosom a slow death-wound, inflicted by my father. Well, for *that*, I never felt a single spark of resentment, although I have suffered by that wound. Well, no matter, *that* is a secret between me and my heavenly Father. But he drove Edgar mad, and to a deed of madness; and never, *never* will I see my father until Edgar brings us together; never, *never* will I receive a letter from him that is not brought by Edgar."

"You look your father's child now, Winny. Nevertheless, you must listen to me. Never mind your vows, Winny. There are some things we cannot do; we cannot sell our souls to the enemy, for the contract would be null and void; nor can we bind ourselves by oath or vow to do *any wrong*, for the oath or vow would not be obligatory; the only sin would be in first having taken the oath or made the vow. You sin in saying what you have just said; you would sin *more* in keeping your word. Listen, Winny. Heaven and Hell; God and Satan; Angel and Demon; Right and Wrong; Good and Evil; the two great Contending Powers in the universe which we describe by each and all these names, are at last two little simple monosyllables—LOVE—HATE. They divide the universe—they are nearly equal in power—they war always. Love struggles to redeem hate—hate struggles to destroy love. Every sacrifice you, even *you*, tiny ephemeral, make to the Spirit of Love, extends the kingdom of love, increases the power of love. Every sacrifice you make to hate, extends the kingdom and augments the strength of hate. Each spirit speaks to you. How radiantly beautiful are the Angels of Love! but oh! those Spirits of Hate, how darkly beautiful they can appear at times! One calls himself AVENGER,

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and with his fiery refulgence would dazzle the glance and dim the worship of an angel. Another, brighter than the sun in mid career, is GLORY, and leads myriads to war with each other. But their beauty and their splendor is all false, all seeming; they have taken the semblance of the angels of light to wile away the world with. If the spirit taking the most deceptive form of all, the form of JUSTICE, has entered your bosom, Winny, do not listen to him, cast him out; invoke the Angel of Love by deeds of love."

"In a word, then, you would advise me to return to my father, who has inflicted such atrocious insults and indignities upon my husband? My father, when his whole course of conduct tended to one end—to separate us, to regain me. No, no, *never* will I go! It would be *wrong* to go."

"Ah, your Spirit of Hate takes a very specious form now. Winny, your filial and conjugal duties never can conflict, never *could*. Your duty is stern, immutable, unmodified by other's performance or neglect of *theirs*. Nothing that your father has done, no wrong that he has committed against yourself or your husband, frees you from your filial obligations. When your father abused *yourself*, even to personal violence, you did not feel that you were freed from duty toward him. No! Well, but when he has abused your husband, who himself stands in a filial relation to him—when he abused your husband in a lesser degree, you, with that exquisite deceitfulness we all practice, drew in your conjugal love to cover and excuse the unfilial resentment or feeling, or *want* of feeling, that you cherish. This must not be, Winny. If *you* yield to the temptation and to the spirit of hate, your household will be forever a discordant and disunited family. That will be terrible. I know, dear Winny, that it is very trying to you; but if you keep your own heart pure, and your lips pure from the spirit of hate, you will reunite your family. For listen, Winny.

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Your father and your husband, whatever their antagonism may be, both love *you* excessively; yes, their love for you is inordinate. In you their hearts and interests will yet unite. They must be reconciled—must love one another; for both love you. By returning to you father, by that quiet submission, you will soften him, you will prepare his heart to receive Edgar, also. Never mind all he has said and sworn to the contrary. As I said before, *such* oaths are not binding—the sin being in *making*, not in breaking them. He will not care a straw about them. You can reconcile him to Edgar. And your father, with the impetuous force of his character, will throw as much or more strength into his patronage of his son-in-law, than ever he threw into his persecution of him. Oh, my love, away with PRIDE! It is a fine-looking spirit, I allow, of majestic mien, godlike brow; but it is a spirit of HATE. It is one of the most alluring and dangerous of the spirits—one of the most powerful of the princes in the confederate empire of Hate—one of the most vigilant and fatal enemies of Love. Listen only to the Spirit of Love—for it is redeeming, almighty, victorious—GOD!"

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE PALSIED HEART.

I blame no heart, no love, no fate,
And I have nothing to forgive;
I wish for naught, repent of naught,
Dislike naught but to live.
The desolation of the soul
Is what I feel—
A sense of lostness that leaves death
But little to reveal;
For death is nothing but the thought,
Of something being again naught.—*Festus.*

It was well for our Winny that she had a friend like Miss Summerfield near her always. Imogene devoted herself to her cousin, and with all the power of her heart and brain, sought to arouse her from the lethargy into which she had fallen.

"What can one do, Winny, under any sorrow but love, pray and hope? To hate will not help you—to despair will not help you—to rebel will not help you—*nothing* will help you but to love and hope—to labor and pray!"

"But I have no will, no power to do either. Let me alone, Imogene; you trouble me."

"I may not let you alone, poor child, not until I have aroused you a little. If you have no will, consequently no power to do your duty, *make the attempt;* and will and power will come, and your merit will be greater and your reward higher; you have control over your actions, and through them over thought and feeling."

So day after day Imogene talked with Winny. And in thus devoting herself to the invalid in body, soul and spirit,

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Miss Summerfield was practicing, or attempting to practice, what she preached. She had wrested herself violently from the circle of her own mysterious and sorrowful environments, and thrown herself into the sphere of her cousin's life.

Imogene Summerfield possessed one eminently distinguishing trait of character. So elevated above every other trait was this, that a phrenologist must have been struck with it at once in the high, pale forehead, towering to its highest point—*veneration*. It was this that at rare intervals, and in inspired moments, had lighted up the classic beauty of the marble features into such all-glorious splendor. Seldom of late, however, were the chiseled features of the young girl warmed into any thing like life. Cold, still, impassive, impenetrable, she moved a shadow through the house. She, such an enthusiast in her religion, had for many weeks past avoided the church. "I prefer to remain with my cousin," was the answer she would give to her mother when any proposition to accompany her to Chapel was made; and Mrs. Summerfield, with an intense gaze into the eyes that ever fell before that look, would sigh and go on alone.

Imogene labored now for one object. She knew that Squire Darling was rapidly recovering; she knew that upon the first day that he could venture to ride so far, he would come over to see Winny; she wished to prepare Winny to meet him, if not with affection, at least without betraying aversion.

But a fearful change was coming over Winny.

It was now the week before the commencement of Lent. It had been the time-honored custom of the Catholics of this neighborhood to give a succession of dinner and tea-parties for a week or two previous to Lent. This was, I suppose, a sort of offspring of the south of Europe carnival. Be that as it may, it was their custom; and so, about

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ten days before Shrove Tuesday, Mrs. Summerfield sent out invitations for a large dinner-party. Among the invited guests, of course, were Squire Darling and his young protege Miss Hinton, whose continued residence under his roof was sanctioned by the presence of a respectable matron, engaged to keep house and nurse him during his convalescence. In her note to her brother, Mrs. Summerfield requested that he would, if he were able to bear the motion of the carriage, ride over some days before the dinner party, and remain a week or two at Red-Stone Hall, that the change of air and the mineral water, together with the society of his daughter, might accelerate his recovery. This kind note was answered by the arrival of Squire Darling in person, looking somewhat thinner and paler than when we last saw him in the arrogance of full-blooded health and strength. Indeed, instead of his brown surtout coat buttoned up, looking like an over-stuffed bag of wool, it hung rather genteelly upon him; so that Harry Joy, whom he had met on the road, and who, in her genial bonhommie, had quite forgiven his rudeness and all his sundry other sins, told him he should next order a dandy coat from his tailor. Well, Squire Darling alighted carefully and cautiously from his carriage, and leaning on his stick, and assisted by his body-servant, went up the stairs at Red-Stone Hall, where he was kindly received by Mrs. Summerfield—his long and dangerous illness having quite softened the sister's heart toward him.

"Show me at once where to find my child, Margaret. You have been a mother to her, Margaret; may God reward you for it!" said the squire, as he limped after his sister.

Mrs. Summerfield led him at once up-stairs, and, opening a back chamber door, said:

"My dear Winny, here is your father," admitted him; and closing the door again, retired, leaving the father and daughter alone.

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It was a small, luxurious, but sombre chamber; a soft, dark carpet on the floor; the walls hung with a dark blue velvet paper. A tent bedstead stood at one end, a large bay window at the other; a fire-place and grate, with two large easy-chairs, occupied the third side, and a dark mahogany bureau and dressing-glass the fourth; the bedstead and window were hung with dark blue damask, and the chairs covered with the same rich but sombre drapery. Over the fire-place hung a fine large oil painting of the Madonna Doloroso, by Correggio. When the door closed on Squire Darling, leaving him in this still, shadowy, blue room, at first the sudden change from noonday without to twilight within nearly blinded him, and it was some seconds before he could make out a slight fragile form, clad in white, and faintly gleaming among the dark blue pillows of a large easy chair, drawn up near the fire. He approached the chair, and looked again before he could, before he *dared* to recognize that blue-white shade as his daughter; *then* he burst into tears, and without a word dropped his stick, sunk down upon the carpet, and, dropping his head upon the arm of her chair, wept bitterly. "When pride thaws, look for floods." And yet he saw only the physical ruin—he did not guess, perhaps he never could have understood, the moral paralysis. And there she sat, motionless, cold, impassable, indeed like a spirit, or the picture of a spirit—that tempest of tears making no more impression than if indeed she had been a shape of mist. At last:

"Winny! Winny! *Winny!* Oh, my motherless child! my dying child! speak to me—*why* don't you speak to me, Winny?"

"Father."

He took the pocket-handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped the tears and perspiration that streamed from his face, drew a convulsive, shuddering sigh, and tottered up

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on his feet—"Winny! Winny! my dear child, say something to me, or I shall believe you dead already! Winny! speak to me, Winny!"

"Father, will you take that other chair?"

"And is that all! My God! how cold and quiet you are! and this is the first time we have met since we both were so near death!" bitterly said the father, as he sank heavily into his chair. She replied nothing, looked nothing. He was not in the habit of controlling any emotion; he did not try to regain his composure—but the perfect quietude of her manner acted upon his nerves, reducing them to something like calmness. They both sat some time in perfect silence—he gazing at her in a sort of still excitement; his gaze disturbing *her* as little as it would have disturbed the Madonna Doloroso above the mantelpiece. At last he broke out again:

"My God, Winny! what is this? This is *worse* than death. The *dying* have more words for their friends than you have for your father. Winny, are you angry and unforgiving?"

This question, the nature of which would have shocked her reverence some months ago, did not, however, affect her now. When it was repeated, she replied:

"No, father."

"What is it then, my shadow? Oh, my poor shadow, what is it?"

"Nothing."

"'Nothing!'—heavens! how impenetrable you are! Winny, where is your little baby? That will arouse you, if any thing will. Winny! I say, where is your child?"

"In the crib, in the corner, father."

"Ah, it is so dark in this gloomy room, I cannot see. Which corner? Oh, yes!"

"Will you hand it to me, father? I have not left my chair for many days, except to go to bed."

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"So! and they leave you here alone?"

"They are all kindness. I prefer it. See, here at my right hand hangs a bell-rope; when I want any thing, I have only to ring it."

He now got up, and, going to the corner, lifted the child from the crib and brought it to his daughter. He laid it on her lap. "Why, Winny, it is all quietness, like yourself. Why, Winny, what makes you so cold—so unlike yourself? Come, let me see you nurse your baby."

"I do not nurse her."

"Not! not nurse her?"

"No. I have no milk for her—never had after the first few days."

"Oh, I see, I see!" said the father, with his voice full of pity. "Yes, I see. Poor little mother, and poor little babe! But it is a great comfort to you, Winny."

No reply.

"Say, is it not, my dear child? You love it very much. It is all the world to you, as you are to me, Winny. Say, isn't it so? say, Winny?"

"No."

"'No' again! My God! *What!* 'No'—did you hear what I asked? I asked you, if you did not love your child?"

"No."

"'No!' Good Heavens!—'*no!*' Is the girl idiotic, then?"

"No, only *numb.*"

"'Numb!' and what may *that* mean, Heaven be good to us?"

"Listen, father. I tell you what is true. It seems to me as if I had been dead and brought to life, with the loss of half my life, half myself. Listen, father; some *intellects* are annihilated by sorrow. It seems to me that my *affections* have been paralyzed by grief. It is true. Before

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this babe was born, I loved it. I feared so much lest it should die, or *I* should die and leave it alone in the world. I prayed God to preserve us *both*, or let us *both* die. Father, that was the last affectionate feeling I had. After days of agony of body, and anguish of mind, insanity, and a temporary death, I awoke; but before I saw my babe, my heart, my very breasts were palsied. I had neither milk for its sustenance, nor love for its life. I feel nothing—not gratitude to my aunt and cousin, not affection for my grandmother, not adoration for my Creator, nor love for my Saviour, nor tenderness for my babe—no, nor *regret* that this is the case. *I feel nothing.*"

"Oh! she is crazy! she is crazy! she is crazy!"

"Father, I am not the *least* insane; my mind is clear and active—so active that I am constantly examining this curious phenomenon—this annihilation of my affections."

"Oh! she's crazy! she's crazy! she's crazy! Why did they not tell me so before this! Margaret! Imogene! Mother! Margaret, I say! Where the d—l are they all? Oh, my God! she's crazy!"

"Come back, father. Come and sit down. I am not crazy—not *mentally* crazy. This may be insanity, father, or rather idiocy; but it is idiocy of the *heart*, not of the *brain*. My mind is clear; see, father, so clear that I can almost explain the matter. Yes, I think I can explain this thing better than any philosopher or physician, because you see, father, I have *experienced* it. Yes, I can define insanity. Sit still, father. Insanity is a partial suppression, and a partial exaltation of LIFE. Insane persons are unconscious or dead to *some* things, and supernaturally conscious of and alive to *others*. The largest life is in the heart and brain. Father, sit still, I am not mad. In Heaven, it is said, the Cherubim *know* most, the Seraphim *love* most; therefore, we know that the Cherubim have the largest and most active *brains*, and the Seraphim the largest

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and most active *hearts*. Sit still, father—what was I saying? Oh! about insanity. There is an insanity where the life is suppressed in the brain—the *intellect*—and exalted in the heart—the *affections:* as in the case of my grandmother; and the subject becomes like a seraph that loves most, and you call their love, dotage, driveling, idiocy. And there is an insanity where the life is suppressed in the heart and *affections*, and supernaturally developed in the brain, the *intellect*—and the subject becomes an abstraction of intellect, like a cherub who knows most—and you call the inspirations *raving*. And if I were to tell you all I know, father, you would call it raving."

"For instance, now?" inquired the wretched father, fixing his eyes on his child, and gulping down his emotion by a strong effort.

"Why, father, when you used to smile upon me, it would light a smile also in my face. It expressed your love for me, and your pleasure in me, and excited mine. Well, father, I know all Nature is intelligent and loving as well as animate—the sun is a great being who loves our earth and all his other family of planets. And the sunshine on our earth is a conscious loving smile, and the reflected light is a conscious loving response."

"*Oh-h-h-h heaven?*"

"Yes, father, don't groan. You call it LIGHT, father. I know it is LOVE."

"Oh-h-h-h, Winny, my child, my child!"

"I know more, father. I know I can't love, because I have got nothing to love through; my heart, you see, is *broken down*. Could I *see* if my *eyes were out*, father? Well, but this is what I know: that I shall die—that my spirit will leave this half-ruined body with the broken heart, and that it will be clothed with a new incorruptible body, with a new heart that can never be broken, and that with that I shall again worship God and love you, Edgar, my baby—

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all people. I used to believe this because the priest said it; now, I am raised to *know* it."

"Oh, my child, my child!"

"I know *more*, father; and oh, listen, lest I should forget to tell you, for I know so many new things; for knowledge comes so fast. It flows on and on, and the new drives out the old; and I want you to remember this."

"Oh-h-h-h!"

"As *my* heart and *my* affections were destroyed by sorrow, so the hearts of others are destroyed by wrong, by injustice, by slander, by neglect, by mal-education; and you call the heart depraved, corrupt, perverted—and so it is, *but not the spirit.* Father, it is the spirit that *suffers;* at death, freed from its ruined and maltreated body, it will be redeemed, freed, clothed upon, and will manifest itself *good* as happy. This gives me no joy now, father; it is cold knowledge—it gives me no joy because I cannot *feel;* I can only *think.* But I know that when I get a new, whole heart, I shall be glad of it in Heaven; and I say this as a blind child would say, I shall *see* new eyes when I get to Heaven."

Again Squire Darling groaned bitterly—then, as his child did not speak again, he seized her hand, hoping—yes *hoping*—to find fever there to account for this fearful wandering of the mind; but no, her pulse was even and rather slow. He picked up his stick, and as fast as his remaining lameness would allow, he hurried from the chamber in search of Mrs. Summerfield. In the mean time Mrs. Summerfield was engaged in conversation with her daughter.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

NIGHT IN DAY.

The mind that broods o'er guilty woes
Is like the scorpion girt by fire.
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,
Till inly scorched by thousand throes,
One sad and sole relief she knows:
And maddened in her ire,
The sting she nourished for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang and cures all pain,
She darts into her desperate brain.
So do the dark in soul expire,
Or live like scorpion girt by fire;
So writhes the soul remorse hath riven—
Unfit for earth—undoomed for Heaven—
Darkness above—despair beneath—
Around it flame—beneath it death!—*Byron.*

IMMEDIATELY upon leaving Squire Darling at the door of his daughter's chamber, Mrs. Summerfield had passed down the long dividing hall, with the intention of seeking a private interview with Imogene. In truth, Mrs. Summerfield had parental griefs of her own, and not, as in Squire Darling's instance, of her own creation. What hand had she, in fact, in producing the great sorrow that was day by day visibly consuming the health and flesh and beauty—the very life of Imogene?—she, who was "innocent of the knowledge" of its cause. Her heart was even more than usually oppressed upon this day. It could not have been otherwise. Since the preparations for this large dinner-party commenced, Miss Summerfield had fallen into deeper gloom; health, flesh and life had wasted with greater and

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fearful rapidity. She had forsaken even Winny. She died hourly. Mrs. Summerfield opened the door of her daughter's chamber and entered. She paused a few steps from the centre of the room, arrested by a still picture—*still*, but full of *tumult*, like a painting of a battle or of a tempest.

Imogene's chamber was beautiful and luxurious; it was all that great wealth, an artist's taste, and a mother's love could make it. It was the largest front room. Two lofty windows from ceiling to floor, opening upon a balcony. commanded a view of the Shenandoah and the mountains beyond. But these windows were now shaded by curtains of purple satin damask, lined with orange-colored silk. The space between the windows was filled up with a large Raphael, a Virgin and Child surmounting a small but elegant altar.

Before this altar knelt Imogene; her hands clasped, her face upraised, her lips struck apart, her brow corrugated, her eyes strained—nay, her very ringlets bristling as it were with anguish. Yes, there was grief, remorse, terror, despair, all branded in letters of fire on that ghastly face. One would say a criminal in view of his execution, a sinner in view of inevitable and eternal perdition, might look so.

Well might the sight strike down all color from the mother's cheek, all strength from the mother's limbs; never before had she seen a harassing agony like this. Struck motionless with grief and fear, the mother stood gazing on the image—the image still and stormy and terrible as the picture of a volcano in flames.

Unable at last to bear it longer, she went and laid her hand upon the upturned, agonized brow, and said:

"Imogene!"

With the fearful spring of a wild beast the girl bounded to her feet, and with a look half of terror, half of defiance, she turned sharply around.

"It is *I*, Imogene," said the half heart-broken mother.

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"My mother!" she exclaimed, violently agitated.

Mrs. Summerfield threw her arms around her daughter, forced her to a gorgeous lounge near, sat down and drew her to her side, drew her head down upon her bosom, and pressing her there again and again in speechless strength of love and sorrow.

"What wouldst thou, my mother?"

"Oh, Imogene, my child, my child, *confide* in me. No matter *what* it is. If it were *possible*—if it *could* be possible—if thou art GUILTY, Imogene, *confide* in me. Lay thy guilt upon my heart. I would take it *all*—the guilt, the remorse, the punishment—*all*, Imogene, to give peace to thy soul. Confide in me, oh, my child!"

"Mother, you charge upon shadows."

"Thou hast not GUILT upon thy soul, then, child! I was *mad* to think it. Yet thy sorrows *make* me mad, Imogene."

"Mother, what shall I do to give thee peace?"

"Do! Convince me thou art not dying of *grief*, REMORSE—I know not what. Alas, you never enter a church—you never go to confession. Imogene, when *were* you at confession? Now, I *insist* upon your telling me that."

"Not since the Easter that I was sixteen years old."

"Nearly three years. Imogene! Nay, now! by all my love for you! by all the duty—no, by all the love you owe me, tell me, I implore thee, I adjure thee, tell me *thy secret*. But, my God, Imogene, you are changing frightfully before me! You grow fierce as a tiger or a maniac. Your eyes sparkle—they blaze! In the name of Heaven, what is it, then?"

Bitterly and fiercely spoke out the transformed maiden.

"I would have spared thee! Thou wilt not let me—thou *wilt* compel me. I am frenzied now, I believe. Yes, I am. Hear it, then. I AM GUILTY! Yes, yes, mother. I, your only child, stands here steeped to the very *lips* in guilt! Yes, guilt; guilt beside which the murderer's crimson soul would pale."

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"Stop, stop; in *mercy* stop!" exclaimed Mrs. Summerfield, holding her temples tightly. But Imogene had no power to stop.

"Yes, GUILTY! I dare not go to confession, I dare not enter a church. I am steeped to the *lips* in guilt—lost in a sea of guilt; guilt that has no name on earth to specify its nature, to express its enormity. Aye, guilt that has closed Heaven, that has barred purgatory, that has opened wide the gates of hell for me."

"Stop, stop, in *mercy* stop! I lose my senses."

"Would I could lose mine."

"Lost girl, repent! Repent!"

"I cannot. I am doomed. Day by day I sink deeper into this perdition."

"Oh God! I have watched over her, prayed for her day and night; how can she have fallen into crime. Imogene, my heart is broken—I shall die; but oh, my child, you are mad to think that you are past the mercy of God. Repent, confess, expiate—go to Father Burleigh. Nay, I will send for him to come here. I am mad! I know not what I say! Tell *me* the nature of your—your crime."

"No, NEVER will I tell that, my mother!" exclaimed Imogene, in a tone so stern, so determined, that, spite of every thing, it arrested the agonizing examination. With exhausting reaction, Miss Summerfield had sunk into the corner of her lounge and buried her face in the pillows. Mrs. Summerfield dropped her face on her hands.

There they remained, without change of attitude, without speaking another word, hour after hour, until the sun went down, until the shades of night gathered darkly in the room—until the servants, missing Mrs. Summerfield, came to seek her; then she arose mechanically, stooped and kissed Imogene, and silently left the room. Miss Summerfield did not appear at the supper-table. Mrs. Summerfield took tea tete-à-tete with her brother, who, as soon as they were seated, said, somewhat petulantly:

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"I have been hunting you all over the house, Margaret. Good Heavens! It seems to me you are very indifferent about my poor child. But *you* are so blessed in your daughter that it makes you selfish, Margaret. A little trouble would improve your heart." And then he went on to tell her of Winny's wanderings. Mrs. Summerfield, with a painful effort to recall her own wandering thoughts, endeavored to reassure him. It was only the effect of sorrow and debility, and would disappear when three causes were removed. If Edgar Ardenne could be found and brought back, Winny would speedily recover. There was nothing fatal in Winny's disorder. Indeed, compared to her own grief, every grief seemed light to this poor mother.

At the name of Edgar Ardenne, the face of the Squire grew black as night, whereby you might know that, however he might pity Winny, he still hated Ardenne.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

DAY IN NIGHT.

Oh! lightly, lightly tread!
A holy thing is sleep,
On the worn spirit shed,
And eyes that wake to weep.
A holy thing from heaven,
A gracious, dewy cloud,
A covering mantle given
The weary to enshroud.

Oh! lightly, lightly tread!
Revere that fair, still brow,
The meekly drooping head,
The long hair's willowy flow;
Ye know not what ye do,
That call the slumberer back,
From the world unseen by you,
Unto life's dim, faded track.—*Hemans.*

MRS. SUMMERFIELD could not sleep that night.

"I wonder if *she* sleeps? Alas, no! she lies and tosses as I do! How many nights, my heaven! has that poor girl waked and suffered! Night after night, and week after week, yes! and month succeeding month, until health and flesh and beauty have wasted away, and my child is haggard at nineteen. I will go and see if she sleeps!" and so saying, Mrs. Summerfield arose, slipped on a dressing-gown, took the shaded night taper and crossing the passage, entered Imogene's chamber. It was very quiet. She listened. There was no sound, no motion, no sigh; nothing to suggest that the occupant of the chamber waked. Mrs. Summerfield approached the bed—gradually and cautiously advanced the light—started, almost ex-

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claimed, with surprise at what she saw. She advanced the taper again and looked more intently. Was *that* Imogene? *That* the girl "steeped to the lips in guilt," and haggard with remorse? *That!* Mrs. Summerfield turned the cylinder of the taper, raising a strong light, and flashing it upon the sleeper. *Was* that Imogene, the girl so lately consumed with guilt and remorse? What, that radiant sleeper, flooded with the glory of some celestial vision? Yes! that was truly Imogene, transfigured and glorified in sleep! how beautiful she looked, and how happy! even to ecstacy. The cover was thrown off her bosom—the beautiful bosom only slightly vailed by the long black ringlets that glided and twined caressingly about it—her arms, the long, loose sleeves falling below the elbows, were thrown up over her head, carrying half her ringlets with them. The face was glorious with a beaming joy; the eyebrows raised, arched and open; the lips full and slightly apart with a dreamy smile; the cheeks faintly colored; the whole complexion of face, arms and bosom, roseate; the muscles all full, elastic, slightly inflated, as by rising joy or life; a very gentle perspiration and regular breathing assured the mother that this was really healthful sleep and happy dreaming. Inspired with hope, the mother dropped upon her knees and thanked God, saying:

"This girl may be an erring maniac, but she is not guilty. Thank God! The guilty never sleep, never dream like that. If it were so, then indeed would the wandering fancies of poor Winny have struck upon some truth!"

She knelt, and watched her long—receiving from the radiant sleeping face a balm for all the wounds the haggard face had given her. Oh! long she knelt by the side of the beautiful sleeper, loath to leave her—loath, for fear that the lost vision would never return to bless her sight, and soothe her fears again. At last she left the chamber and returned to bed, to lie there and wonder at the strange oc-

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currence. She thought of all that she had read of trances, ecstacies, in which, when the body seemed to sleep, the soul was absent—but all she remembered of such cases only convinced her that this sleep of Imogene's was neither trance nor ecstacy—the soul was not absent from that glorified body! No!—it was *very* present—present in its most exalted life—making radiant the countenance of the beautiful sleeper; no—this was a healthful sleep, and a heavenly dream; but, what, then, was the remorse that, consuming Imogene all day long, was lifted from her soul at night?

The lady was an early riser—she was up with the sun. She saw nothing of Imogene until they were all assembled at breakfast, when her daughter entered—pale, still, cold, impassible as usual, and took her seat at the table, as unlike the radiant and celestial dreamer of the night before as she was to the tortured, half-frenzied sufferer of the day before.

"Have you seen Winny this morning, Miss Summerfield?" inquired her uncle.

"Yes, sir,—I have just left her room. She has not yet risen."

"How is she then, my dear?"

"As usual."

"And who is with her?"

"Our grandmother. She has the adjoining room to Winny. She stays with her always."

"She was not there when I went in yesterday; and, by-the-way, I have not seen her mother—how is *she*?"

"She is improving in health—she is quiet and happy since her reunion with Winny—she is dotingly fond of the baby, and passes all her time in Winny's chamber, except an hour in the afternoon, when she retires to take her nap. You will find her there after breakfast. She breakfasts with Winny."

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"Yes!—well! poor Winny! poor child! you really think, Margaret, that she is not entirely out of her mind?"

"She is unsettled and fanciful. I have seen such cases before. Her mind will grow quiet as her health improves."

"Quiet!—now God forbid that she should grow any quieter than she is! *Quiet!* I do not know which is the more quiet, she or the Madonna Dolorosa over her mantelpiece. By-the-way, take it down! hang there a picture of a little boy and girl riding on a jackass, or any thing that looks pleasant or half silly; and down, also, with the dark curtains—let in a flood of sunlight—and instead of my poor old mother, turn little Nimrod, turn Harry Joy in on her."

"And shock her into convulsions—for that would be the end of it," replied Mrs. Summerfield. "No, my brother, our treatment is wisest; hypochondriasis may be so cured, but real sorrow is not so *fooled.*" After a little conversation—"I have sent the carriage for Father Burleigh and Harriette, brother," said the lady.

"Have you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we shall have company enough here, presently. I have sent *my* coach for Sina."

"You should have brought her with you."

"Yes, but you see Sina would not ride so long a journey alone with me—Sina is so foolish, so old-maidish."

"Miss Hinton is a very discreet young lady—over-particular in some things, I admit."

Rising, they left the table and separated. The squire wending toward Winny's chamber. Mrs. Summerfield, drawing her daughter's arm within her own, turned into their mutual sitting-room.

"How are you, this morning, my love?"

"Steady, sane,—mother! no more of yesterday!"

"No, no!—but, Imogene, do you know that Colonel Dangerfield has returned?"

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"Has he?"

"How quietly you say that! Yes, he has, Imogene. He is at 'The Soldier's Rest.' I sent a card of invitation to him yesterday—this morning he sends back a reply, declining the visit, and excusing himself. Imogene, what is the meaning of *this*?"

"He knows, mother, that his presence distresses me."

"And *why*, Miss Summerfield?"

"Stop, mother, stop!—I *beseech* you, stop. Tell me of any thing I can do to please you, and I will do it,—only do not probe my soul so. Mother, is there any thing I *can* do to satisfy you?"

"Yes!—go to church, Imogene!—go regularly. Lent is setting in—the devotions of the season will calm your mind. Near Easter, go to confession—receive the blessed Eucharist, and you will have peace. Say, Imogene, will you do so?"

"I will go to church, mother; that is all I can promise."

"The rest may follow," said the lady.

Again that night her mother left her bed, and stole to the chamber of her daughter. Again she found the beautiful sleeper radiant with the light of some celestial vision—her exaltation higher than before—her flesh slightly inflated—as though a happy spirit breathed through every pore—her skin roseate—her brow open, arched, and serenely joyous!—her lips rosy, dewy, and half apart in a beaming smile!—her very finger ends, half lost in the shining ringlets, were rosy and elastic with the high tide of life: the gentle perspiration, the regular breathing, attesting the healthful sleep—the radiant brow and smiling lips revealing the happy dream. Again the mother knelt by the bedside, and offered up thanks to the Divine Father, that so watched and blessed her daughter's slumber. Then rising, and looking a kiss upon that heavenly brow, she left the chamber.

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The few days preceding the dinner-party passed in this way:—In the day, Imogene was pale, cold, still, reserved, or if her reserve was noticed, violently agitated, almost convulsed. In the night, in sleep, so roseate, warm, alive and radiant.

Sina Hinton arrived upon the evening of the day she had been sent for. Just as she alighted from the carriage, the coach containing Father Burleigh and Harriette drove up. They met on the piazza. Miss Hinton immediately advanced to the old priest, and held out her hand—he stopped, shrank from her, and shuddered. Harriette turned her back when she saw her approach. Miss Hinton, without the least embarrassment, went on, and was received at the hall door by Mrs. Summerfield, who pressed her hand kindly, before she passed out to welcome the priest and his eccentric niece. No one saw the smile of fiendish malice that flickered, flamelike, around the crimson lips, and gleamed from the black eyes of the girl, as she went upstairs, attended by a maid, to change her dress.

This toilet was soon made, and she descended to the drawing-room. I said that Sina had changed—had grown into a sort of fiendish beauty. She was *very* small, *very* slight, very elegant and graceful—her features were sharp and fierce, but her command of them so perfect, that this "daughter of man" might have drawn down from Heaven a "Son of God," by the fascination of her smile. She wore a dark blue satin, closely fitting, and no ornament, except the long, black, spiral ringlets.

When she appeared at the door, Squire Darling immediately arose, crossed the room, and gave her his arm, and conducted her to a seat.

"By the side of Father Burleigh, if you please, or rather between Father Burleigh and Mrs. Summerfield. I wish to sit near Mrs. Summerfield, and I wish to ask that dear old gentleman about his precious health and spirits," said Sina. with her piquant smile.

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"As you please, willful sprite! till *dinner*, but *after* dinner you sit with *me*, you know," rejoined our squire, forgetting his troubles in the charm of Sina's voice and smile.

Well, he took her straight up to the sofa upon which sat Mrs. and Miss Summerfield and Father Burleigh, saying:

"Here! Miss Hinton will accept no seat but one between Mr. Burleigh and yourself, Margaret—she loves you both so well!" and smiling, withdrew.

To divide her witcheries, Miss Hinton took Mrs. Summerfield's hand, and drawing it on her own lap, caressed it between her own small, dark fingers, while she leaned shoulderwise and affectionately toward Father Burleigh; and raising her dark, beautiful head, with all its falling ringlets, and lifting her fine eyes lovingly toward his, she cooed, in softest tones:

"Oh-h-h! I've *longed* to see you so much, dear Father! How do you do? Um-m-m-me? You do not look well, Father—are you in good health? Um-m-m-me?"

"My health is failing, Miss Hinton," coldly and haughtily replied the priest, turning pale with fear and disgust.

"Um-m-me—I feared so," pathetically cooed Sina, still keeping her eyes lovingly raised to his. "I am afraid you do not go into society enough. You must give us your company for a day at Oak Grove, and bring Miss Harriette with you—really you must now; I intend to exact that promise before you leave;" and then there darted from the softness of her eyes a quick, stiletto-like menace, quickly withdrawn but understood.

"You will come—will you not, dear Father?"

"I—I shall be too happy," gasped the priest, shrinking from her leaning shoulder, as from a fire.

Then changing her tone to one of arch bantering, she turned to Mrs. Summerfield, and said:

"Do you know that Father Burleigh once saw a ghost in the church-yard?"

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The priest was ghastly with illness, dread, loathing—or all three.

"Look, Mrs. Summerfield, look at Father Burleigh! I declare he believes in ghosts! Just see how the mention of the subject alarms him! Did you ever tell Mrs. Summerfield of the ghost you saw, Father Burleigh? *Did* he, Mrs. Summerfield?"

"No; but I *did* hear a strange report—was it ever investigated, Father Burleigh?—ever explained?" inquired that lady, suddenly turning to the priest, and noticing now, for the first time, his extreme pallor and violent agitation.

"Good Heavens!—Father Burleigh!—Miss Hinton! a glass of water!—quick! Father! what is it?"

"N-nothing! A—a vertigo. I am subject to it—it will pass away!"

Miss Hinton had flown from the room, and now returned with a glass of water, which she pressed upon the priest's acceptance. He received it from her hands with averted eyes, and strong symptoms of hydrophobia. After a while she took the empty glass from him, beckoned her humble servant, Squire Darling, from the opposite side of the room, gave it to him to take out, and turning, bestowed her affectionate attentions again upon the suffering Father.

"Are you better now, dear Father—um-m-m-me?" tenderly cooed my dove, nestling against my old raven, lovingly.

"Yes, yes, I am better now."

"I am so relieved! Indeed, my own nerves have been dreadfully shattered by *a dream* I had last night."

"A dream!" exclaimed Mrs. Summerfield, whom we know to have been very much interested in the philosophy of night sleep and dreams.

Even the cold, still, abstracted Imogene was aroused from her apathy.

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"A dream!" she repeated, fixing her large commanding eyes steadily upon Miss Hinton, who, passing her hand to and fro across her brow, as if to charm away a shadow there, replied:

"Oh, yes, *a dream*—a *dreadful* dream! Listen, Father Burleigh, for I wish you to give me absolution for such a wicked dream."

The priest raised his head, and fixed his eyes in doubt and fear upon the countenance of the malign girl. Mrs. Summerfield was also gazing at her.

"My soul was in purgatory last night!"

"Ah! I believe it quite possible for the soul to be in Heaven or in hell during sleep," said the lady, in a low but earnest voice. Imogene started violently, the blood rushed to her very brow, dying it almost purple, and very slowly receding, left it of a deathlike pallor. Mrs. Summerfield saw this, and suppressed a groan.

"My dream," said Miss Hinton, "was this.—Listen, Father, to my

"DEMON DREAM.

"Methought the night was dark and stormy. I stood upon the shore of Chesapeake Bay. The sky was pitch black, except that the bay was in a seething tempest—its waves rolled up from the bottom, and, luminous with phosphorescent light, roared and rocked to and fro like the blue flames of a measureless sea of fire, flaming up against the inky sky, and tinging the black clouds with a lurid, blood-colored light. The wind ran groaning, howling, and shrieking like a maniac-demon around the horizon. The thunder broke overhead with the terrific report of an exploded world, rolling in fragments down the abyss of space! The lightning glared around with the consuming light of a firmament in conflagration. The phosphorescent waves of the

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stormy bay burned pale and blue beneath the sudden and insufferable blaze of light!

* * * * * *

But tossing to and fro from one pale, blue flaming wave to another was seen—what do you think, Father Burleigh?—a SKELETON—*boat?*" questioned the fell girl, fixing her eyes suddenly with their lurid light full upon those of the priest. The attention of her hearers had been too absorbed by the magnetic power of the demon-girl to notice the increasing and alarming illness of the priest, who now fell forward in a swoon! The company started up in dismay and confusion, bells were rung violently, servants ran in hurriedly, the old man was raised and laid upon the sofa, a groom was dispatched on horseback for a physician, and, in the terrors and consternation that ensued, no one thought of the termination of Sina Hinton's Demon Dream.

She knelt by his side, bathed his temples with hartshorn, watched his returning life with the deep interest of malice, and when at last he opened his eyes, stooped and hissed in his ears:

"When you give me another public affront, look for another—'*vertigo!*'"

All this time Harriette Joy was in Winny's chamber playing with the baby, chatting with the old lady, and doing her cheerful best to make every one there happy.

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CHAPTER XXX.

CLAUDE VELLEMONTE.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth,
With sovran eyes of depth profound—
And yet,
The power of life was in them set.—*Mrs. Browning.*

THE day of the dinner-party came. The handsomely-furnished drawing-room was decorated and thrown open, and, according to the ceremonious custom of the day and neighborhood, Mrs. and Miss Summerfield, supported by Squire Darling, stood near the door to receive their guests. They were rather a handsome trio. Squire Darling "neatly, trimly dressed—fresh as a bridegroom," in his suit of speckless black, which well became his fair complexion and fair blue eyes, cleared by recent illness, and his soft light hair. Squire Darling betrayed a consciousness of looking exceedingly well. Mrs. Summerfield was a lady of rare matronly beauty, as I have before hinted. Her tall and finely rounded form was arrayed in a full dinner costume of rich black velvet, and a small slight gossamer cap set off without concealing the heavy bands of glossy black hair parted above her noble brow. Miss Summerfield wore a crimson satin with full and open sleeves and open corsage, with chemisette and under-sleeves of fine lace in full and deep falls. Her long black ringlets, flowing down as usual in their divisions, were without any ornament beyond a single string of pearls around her classic head. Imogene seemed paler,

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thinner than ever. Nay, by the contrast of her glowing dress and long black curls, her face looked haggard, ghastly —but, alas! little did Miss Summerfield think or care about her looks. She leaned wearily upon her uncle's arm, and received her guests with a politeness so evidently forced as to call forth remarks such as these, when the latter had passed out of hearing:

"What can be the matter with Miss Summerfield?—and of all wonders, where is Colonel Dangerfield?" and the simplest and dullest of their visitors would immediately combine these two circumstances.

Nearly all the expected visitors had arrived, and Miss Summerfield, nearly sinking with fatigue, had just requested permission to leave her post, when the name of "Mr. Vellemonte" was announced; and Squire Darling felt the form reclining upon his arm start and quiver as if pierced by an arrow, and whispering hastily:

"You are fatigued, Miss Summerfield, and I must lead you to a seat," would have done so, but that the gentleman announced immediately afterward entered the room and stood before them. Squire Darling bowed very lowly and gravely, and Mrs. Summerfield with more than usual suavity greeted her new visitor and took him off to a seat.

"That is the new priest."

"That is Mr. Vellemonte, the new pastor of Sacred Heart."

"How remarkably handsome! how singularly graceful!"

"How strangely like Miss Summerfield! Did you ever see such a likeness?" were the suppressed whispers of the company, as Mr. Vellemonte crossed the room and took a seat near a lady of his own congregation. The subject of their comments was indeed singularly handsome. He was a fine specimen of a harmoniously developed vital temperament. I fear he would not interest the poetic reader, for, with all his remarkable beauty, *health* was the great and

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striking peculiarity of his being. He was the ideal of physical, mental, and moral HEALTH. The impersonation of a vigorous LIFE. LIFE was in every limb and feature, in every expression, gesture, and motion. Strange, but when you saw him, you became conscious that every one else in comparison was more or less out of health. He was tall and rather full-formed, his countenance was very fine, his forehead was high and broad, his face rather long, but his cheeks and chin so full and round as to give the whole face a beautiful oval cast; his complexion was clear and sanguine, his hair a warm auburn, and his eyes clear blue, his mouth perfectly beautiful in form and expression; yet, with all this difference of form and complexion, he was startlingly like the dark and haggard Imogene. It was impossible to analyze this startling resemblance, for, when closely examined, it was so intangible that it would disappear, and you would say it was a hallucination—there was none at all—until he would look at you or speak, and then the resemblance—say almost the *identity*—would half terrify you. There sat the subject of this description cheerfully conversing with the lady on his right hand. From the time of his entrance, a new spirit seemed infused into the hitherto formal and silent company. Conversation received an impulse, and pleasant talk and merry jest and happy smile went around and around like a pleasant agitation, affecting all but Miss Summerfield, who, in a remote corner, sat alone and moody. Soon Vellemonte arose and mingled with the crowd, diffusing life and gayety as he passed.

"Dear me! I think he is very lively for a minister of the gospel!" said a sour-visaged lady in a hissing whisper, unconscious of being heard by the subject of her remark. Vellemonte turned quickly around and dropped his eyes, raining light and blessing and joy upon her, and then passed on. The lady's brow cleared as by magic; and warmed and exalted, she, too, passed on her way rejoicing in light.

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Through the crowd he was seeking Harriette. He found her—and the merry maiden sprang joyously to meet him.

"I want you to take me to Mrs. Ardenne's chamber," said he.

And Harriet, with a "Certainly; please come this way!" led him out. She took him straight up to Winny's apartment. "Now, do you wish me to go in?"

"Yes," said he, with his hand on Harriette's short curls.

"Yes, I wish you to come in." And they entered.

Winny was in the same arm-chair—in the same still attitude. The old lady sat in the one opposite, smiling to the babe that lay in the crib beside her. A brighter smile broke like a burst of sunshine over the old lady's face as the young priest entered. Even Winny's cold face lighted up. He took the hands of each—and then sat down between them * * * * * When he left them a half hour after, the face of the old lady was lighted with intelligence, and that of Winny, with emotion—*at last.* When he reached the drawing-room the people were all going in to dinner. He took the arm of Miss Summerfield, and drawing it within his own, conducted her to the table; and during the passage, while her arm reposed on his, her excited nerves grew calm, her heart quiet, her mind clear, as by a miracle. He sat by her side during dinner—watched her attentively, and waited on her zealously. When dinner was over, he again drew her arm within his own and took her back to the saloon to a distant *fauteuil*, and sat down beside her—his clear eyes turned with interest upon her haggard face, seeking to read there the secret of her misery. The other guests, who had followed them into the saloon, dispersed themselves in gay parties over the room. None approached their *fauteuil.* He was still perusing her countenance. Her eyes were dropped—yet there was no disturbance, no paleness, no trembling, no shrinking from that clear and searching gaze. All was calmness. At last he spoke, and his round full liquid notes were melody.

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"Imogene, we meet at last—meet for the second time for three years; and I find you, oh! so frightfully altered. Imogene, I know nothing of this. I knew you had never entered the chapel since my arrival, but I conjectured that devotion to your cousin prevented you. I did not guess that you had been ill. *Have* you been ill, Imogene?"

"In body? *no*," replied Miss Summerfield, without lifting her eyelashes.

"Then you have mentally suffered, Imogene. It is even as I feared. Tell me the cause of your trouble, Imogene. Ha! do you shudder so, and grow pallid, and drop your face upon your hands! Nay, nay—look up, Imogene, raise your eyes to mine. I would *soothe*, not agitate you; look at me, Imogene."

Was there mesmerism or magic in those soft full tones—full of compassion as command? Miss Summerfield, with the involuntary docility of a child, slowly raised her eyes, and slowly let them meet his own—his clear deep eyes, whence light and life, blessing and joy, streamed into hers, filling her heart with peace—raising her soul to a new sense of life. It was as though that glance had rent apart the curdling blood that now flowed healthfully through all her veins—flushing her cheeks, lighting her eyes, and elevating her spirits.

He was a shade paler, a degree sadder, as he said:

"I will not ask you for your secret again, Imogene. *Some day you will tell it me.* But I *will* ask you to come to church. Promise me that."

"Yes, I promise it—the more readily that I have passed my word to my mother to do so."

"That is well. Imogene, look in my eyes and read my soul deeply as your glance can pierce—and for any thing that lies deeper than that, ask me and I will tell you."

"Why do you say this to me?"

"Because I read in your countenance, among other things, a wonder, an interest, and a curiosity."

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"*Nothing more?*"

"Yes; something more! *Shall I tell you what I read, Imogene?*"

"No!" exclaimed Imogene, shuddering violently, struck with a sudden convulsion.

The hand of the priest fell slowly and lightly on hers, and her agitation subsided. "Now, Imogene, you might, if you so pleased, tell me the darkest secret of your heart, and it would grow bright in the communication; or, you may ask me for mine—you may sift me thoroughly."

"Tell me, then," said Miss Summerfield, "the secret of your power."

"My power? Imogene, the evening is pleasant, though cool; will you come on the lawn?" And without waiting her reply, he cheerfully arose, took her hand, and drew her through the glass-doors, and down the marble steps to the lawn. "Now, my power—*which* power, Imogene? I have several."

"Listen, then. Three years ago, before I had ever seen you, I was attacked with typhus fever. I was in extremity, and a priest was summoned to anoint my hands and feet for burial. You came. I was speechless, sinking—you gave me extreme unction—your touch struck all the electric chords of life; you prayed by me—and your voice called back the departing spirit—I lived! I knew my life-giver. Explain that."

"Imogene! I earnestly desired your recovery. I prayed for it—believed in it; and sought with my strong electric life to galvanize yours into a new vigor; that is all."

"Again! we met around the death-bed of an old, a *very* old lady. We believed her dying of age, sorrow, and palsy. You were summoned. You anointed the sick with oil—prayed by her, touched her—and she lived! How was that?"

"I said, if this aged woman dies now and thus—a young

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heart will be smitten with an incurable remorse through life. I believed in the possibility of restoring even *her*. I prayed for it. I strove for it. God heard my prayer, and blessed my effort, and she lived!"

"*A third time!* My cousin Winny became a mother, and fell into a sudden lethargy that was all but death. Her senses were suspended. Her pulse was gone. She was pronounced *dead*—only you averred it was not so. You sat by her for hours, with her hand clasped in yours. Life passed again into that rigid form—she recovered—she awoke."

"And when I felt the cold hand warm and thrill in mine, I laid it upon the lap of her grandmother, who sat upon the bed, and went out—went to return the most hearty thanks for a granted prayer that ever inspired my soul."

"There is something more in this than you have explained. At least there is more than I apprehend. Listen yet. *This day*, before you came, our company was formal, silent, stiff. You entered, and the gloom was dispersed; the formal became easy and suave; the silent were set to chatting pleasantly; the stiff unbended; the sad became merry; the sullen gay! Come, tell of this!"

"Imogene, I can better explain this. Imogene, you put a lump of sugar in a tasteless glass of water, and the whole fluid is sweet; you put a few drops of perfume in a vial of sweet-oil, and all becomes fragrant. Imogene, every thing in the material world has its correspondences in the spiritual. I am always happy, Imogene; and whither I go I carry happiness. I am filled with faith; I inspire others with faith. I am very strong; I strengthen those I meet. I have perfect health. My influence upon all with whom I converse is wholesome. Are you satisfied?"

"Not yet. By what power do you draw *me* out? By what power do you calm my nerves, quiet my mind—yet set me talking—to talking as I should never talk if I were

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not under a species of influence, of which I am conscious, but which I do not comprehend."

"By WILL, Imogene!"

"Yes! yes! but how does that will act upon mine. Tell me."

"You are scarcely prepared for that knowledge yet, Imogene; however"— he fixed his eyes, with their dazzling rays of light, full upon hers and said—"*shall* I tell thee, Imogene?"

"No," exclaimed Miss Summerfield, with sudden energy.

And again that hand sank slowly, lightly, softly upon hers—and again the delirium of her nerves subsided, and she grew serene and became cheerful. Rising, he left her side now and went through the rooms, like a sun-ray spreading light and cheerfulness. Many of the visitors present, saw, for the first time, their young pastor out of the pulpit. All admired him; he drew all hearts as well by his perfect beauty, as by the subdued joyousness of his expression and manners. Only one dark form withdrew before him, keeping far out of his way, lurking in corners, gliding by walls, hiding in the midst of a group or within the shades of a curtained bay window. One person that he had never yet chanced to meet face to face—*Sina Hinton*. Mrs. Summerfield rejoiced to see the new and healthful cheerfulness that her daughter revealed. Ascribing it at once to the influence of her pastor, she hoped that this might continue. More than ever of late she had been possessed of the idea that her daughter's melancholy arose rather from a distempered mind than from any external and tangible cause. She had been growing to believe Imogene the subject and victim of a monomania. This she now hoped would yield to the spiritual influences of religion. And as the evening wore away, and she saw Imogene emerging more and more from her moody abstraction, beaming into bright and brighter life, once more she dared look forward to the dearest object of her

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temporal aspirations—her daughter's marriage with Colonel Dangerfield. Indeed, she had most painfully felt that the delay of this expected marriage, without apparent cause or any explanation, had subjected them to conjecture and comment, ill to be braved by a spirit high as hers. Now her long depressed hopes arose. Night came. Her guests dispersed. Imogene made her good-night with a smile—a smile! she had not seen one on her waking face before for three years. And there was a fervent joy in the "good-night and God bless you, my child!" that she breathed in parting from her daughter at the door of Imogene's chamber. She went to her own room, and having prayed retired to bed, and immediately fell asleep.

"We war not with flesh and blood (only,) but with powers and principalities of darkness."

Mrs. Summerfield was suddenly startled from her deep sleep, by something—a dream—a shock—a sudden and unaccountable terror; and springing up in bed, shook as with an ague fit. A moment passed so, and then the strong mental control of the lady subdued the agitation of her nerves, and she arose and struck a light. Her first thought was her daughter. With an unaccountable presentiment and a vague terror, she passed into Miss Summerfield's room. She went up to her bed—started! suppressed a shriek at the appalling sight that met her eyes. Deathly pale, frightfully distorted, violently convulsed, yet sleeping still—was that form. Oh, the agony! oh, the anguish written on that writhen brow of the sleeper! Down and out went the candle, with her delirium of alarm.

"Imogene! Imogene! awake! awake!" she exclaimed, raising the girl in her arms. Miss Summerfield slowly opened her eyes—slowly, more slowly than ever before, came back the light of her soul to them. "Imogene! my child, my child—what is all this?"

Miss Summerfield was now calmly looking on her mo-

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ther's face. She arose, and giving her hand to that mother, said—"And are your nights, as well as your days, disturbed by care for me, my dear mother? Come, I *will* tell thee my dark secret—thou shalt guide me. Come, mother! let us go into your chamber—here it is purgatory—*your* room is a peaceful and holy heaven."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DARK SECRET.

Question: Can nothing lese than sinning sate the soul,
Can nothing but perdition serve to nest—
Our hearts?—*Festus.*

Answer: Man seeks happiness in low or unworthy objects; that is his sin: he does not find it there; that is his glory.—*Dewey.*

"No, mother, do not light the candle, or I could never tell you. Come, mother, sit with me on that low lounge under the window; yes, draw the curtain back, unclose the shutters, let the still, holy starlight in—there—so that I can dimly see your form while my face is in shadow. Put your arm around me, mother; let me lay my brow upon your soft shoulder—so—do not speak yet, mother; let me tell you as I should talk in a dream. Nay, I *am* in a dream; let me tell you before I waken, or before my mood changes, when the rack would not wring my secret from me. Are you listening, mother? Press me closer if you can, but do not speak—do not make me too wide awake—let me speak, act, as in a dream."

A gentler, closer embrace of the soft arm—a gentle kiss of the soft lips, was the only answer. The day was near

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dawning. The mother and daughter were seated on the downy settee with their backs to the window. One of the mother's arms was around the waist of her child, whose forehead rested on her shoulder; her other hand clasped that of Imogene. Miss Summerfield commenced in a low, monotonous tone, like one indeed talking in sleep and fearful of waking.

"It is three years—nearly four, mother—since I went from home to school, is it not? Well, mother, I was joyous, then, was I not? Life *seemed*—yes, life *was*, very very brilliant, very dazzling to me! I was filled with enthusiasm and joy! Perhaps the highest joy I felt then, mother, was in the ardent admiration of my—of my—of Colonel Dangerfield. Wherever I might be, I seemed alike to walk in the light of a glorious vision; and the most glorious feature, the god of that vision, was Colonel Dangerfield. Yes, mother, whether when I was packed into a close stage-coach on my journey to school, or in the crowded first-class room, or in the recreation grounds, or the chapel, or the dormitory—wherever my body, or even my intellect might be, my spirit was roaming through palace, halls, grounds, with Dangerfield. The ring he placed upon my finger at parting, the miniature that he hung upon my bosom, seemed to me holy as the holiest saint's relics. They were my talismans; I would clasp them in prayer; I walked apart as in a golden dream. Every thing ministered to this one idea—Dangerfield. In all my occupations, amusements and studies, this was the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end. Yea, this was the centre around which my whole life revolved. Did I read history? I saw nothing there so prominent as the noble Roman matrons, the noble wives of history, and said in my profoundest heart, even such a wife will I be to my noble American! Did I weary in any task? I looked upon my ring, upon his miniature, and said, for *thy* sake,

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for *thy* heroic sake, I will conquer repugnance, I will master this task; and then my heart would fire with enthusiasm, and the toil itself would cast a reflex pleasure, exquisite as profound. I did not mingle with my school-fellows. All deep joy shuns levity as sorrow does—yes, *more* than sorrow does. Sorrow *may* seek to disguise or distract itself in levity, but earnest joy is always serious. So I walked apart in a golden dream. My companions called me haughty; my teachers charged me with absence of mind; and they were right. No nun among my teachers lived such an 'inner life' as I did. My life was 'hidden' indeed with—not with a 'heavenly,' but an *earthly* 'bridegroom.' Yes! I was indeed 'Glory's Bride'—in *imagination*.

"Dangerfield was my enthusiasm, my worship, my secret treasure, and I would be glad when my head was on the pillow, and the real world was dark and silent, was *gone* from me, and vista after vista of the ideal world, each more glorious than the other, would open before me 'in the bright pageant of a midnight dream.' The great cities of the earth, the kingdoms of the world, and the powers thereof, passed in rapid and dazzling succession—a magnificent panorama before my mind's eye—and first and last, and most glorious there, lighting up my dream as the sun lights up day, radiated—DANGERFIELD. Oh! can I make you see how splendid beyond one's brightest conceptions of heaven these all-glorious visions were?"

"You *loved* him, Imogene! Oh, Imogene, you loved him *so much!* You might have been happy as prosperous! Alas, what followed? I wait to hear."

A profound sigh, followed by a deep silence, answered her. At last:

"Do you recollect, mother, that I was scarcely fifteen years old then, and by no means precocious?"

"Yes, yes; I remember—but go on—or rather I mean—take your time, my dear child."

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"Mother, I *loved* him *not*. I *never* loved him; never *could*, never *can* love him!"

"IMOGENE! are you then *indeed* mad? You give me the history of the most rapt and passionate devotion, and end by saying that you *did* not, *could* not, *can* not love the man!"

"Mother, was it thus you loved my father?"

"No, not with such enthusiasm; he was a most worthy man, and I loved him truly, soberly, and faithfully; for I was a widow at eighteen, and never remarried."

A long pause followed this, and then Imogene resumed the conversation.

"No, mother, not *so*. You *loved* my father; for you *loved*, and I did *not*—*my* passion, for it *was* a passion, if one ever fired a human soul—was of the imagination *only*—it was the fever, the enthusiasm, the very ecstacy of HERO-WORSHIP!—nor more, nor less."

"Oh, Imogene! there is something behind yet."

"There is, and yet—. Well! you know, mother; or perhaps you do *not* know, that the holy and secluded sisterhood are most voracious after news of the outside and unholy world. Of all the dwellers upon earth, they are the most inveterate gossips! They gossip with the elder girls; for from them, after their return from visits out, they get the newest news, and to them they impart any morsel of interest that they, in the seclusion of their retreat, may have picked up from a casual visitor. Thence it fell out that from the sisters, at last, the elder girls found out the secret of my betrothal; and then one by one, and little by little, they sought to edge into my confidence. One young lady would inform me that her father had been chairman at the great dinner given to Colonel Dangerfield at Richmond; and saying that she believed he was of my neighborhood, would ask me if I were personally acquainted with him. Another would tell me that her eldest sister had been on

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the committee of ladies appointed to present Colonel Dangerfield with a sword from the ladies of Winchester. I always acknowledged the acquaintance, but did not encourage further questioning; however much the glow that would kindle on my cheek might betray me. Sometimes I would come suddenly into the recreation-room and find a group of girls discussing *him* and me! 'Heiress of an immense fortune?' 'Yes! already engaged?' 'Yes, indeed! I guess he is! my father says he will be Secretary of War next term;' 'I heard my uncle Peter say, that he would run for Governor at the next election;' &c., &c. Alas! mother, I suppose you think I tell all these petty details to stave off as long as possible—*the truth.*"

"Nay, courage, my Imogene; I have grown very calm; tell me now calmly what next!"

"I will tell you. I too am quiet now. I dreaded the telling of this story, or the commencement of it, as one dreads the first incision of the lancet; but now the pierce is past, the vein is opened, and the blood flows freely!"

"My child, talk plainly, quietly; do not indulge in such ghastly metaphors."

"I will not. I will go on soberly; for now methinks it is more like a dream than ever. Mother, I lived in that world of ideas, glory and joy, until typhus fever broke out in the school, and I was among its first victims. Our old chaplain and Father Confessor died; a successor was appointed temporarily to fill his place. This happened before I was taken ill, yet the successor had not arrived yet. Mother, more than ever in the delirium of fever, was my mind absent from my body—not in a world of joy and glory as before, but in one every way the reverse. Visions of fire and smoke—vast sheets of flame scorched and suffocated me; visions of blood sickened me with disgust and horror; at one moment I was wrapt in the flames of a burning city, and at another sinking in a sea of gore. All the horrors

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of all the wars I had ever read of in history were reproduced and re-enacted around me. All the fields of carnage—all the sacked cities and murdered children—all—all the horror without the glory! And through all was that intolerable feeling of burning fire, and that insufferable, loathsome, suffocating *smell* of fresh blood! Oh! it was horrible! horrible! horrible! and more horrible than all, by a grotesque phantasy, as the presiding Demon of this hellish storm, moved hither and thither through smoke and flame and blood, the hideous, the blackened and deformed caricature of—*Dangerfield!* Methought he gave the word of command that sped the cannon-ball on its errand of destruction into the peaceful town. With the ubiquity of a dreamer I stood within a dwelling with the split and blackened walls still shivering around me; dead bodies in fragments lying about; gray-haired women; little boys and young girls; innocent victims! and worse than all, oh! pitying angels, a *babe*, the sole survivor of the family—a young babe lay under a table with both its legs crushed off."*

"Hush, hush, Imogene, those ghastly visions of your delirium. It is owing to the high fever, the blood in your head."

"Sometimes my visions would escape from the poignant anguish of individual and detailed suffering, and lose themselves in a dilating horror, less painful because bewildering. It seemed that my demon-warior and bridegroom had built me a throne of the bleeding bodies."

"Hush, hush, Imogene, you excite yourself and terrify me. Go on quietly, my dear—what next?"

"Mother, *this*:—Gradually, very gradually, the fire burned low—the fever cooled—the vision of flame and blood departed, leaving me only the haunting memory; then my soul fluttered—floated—wavered toward the light

* *Fact.* Letter from Mexico.

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of consciousness and reason; still it was not a recovery or an awakening, it was more like a healthful transition in a dream. I became quiet, cool, moist, half conscious of a cool and vapory perspiration, and a pleasant slumber. A cool, delicious touch, like a snow-flake on my brow, at last awoke me. I opened my eyes and looked up—living, sane, restored, happy—looked up to meet a pair of eyes brooding over mine—eyes so clear and pure in their beautiful depths, that it seemed I could look deep down a boundless heaven within. Those eyes—I saw—I felt only those eyes. They were another vision to me—a vision of new life—of love—of joy—streams of light poured from their orbs into mine, illuminating, strengthening all my being. They talked to me so much in that instant of time. They said: 'Awake, arise, put on thy strength, for thy Redeemer cometh.' They said: 'Even as now has passed away that horrid dream of flame and blood, so will at last pass away all the crime and anguish of earth; and as now thou hast awakened cool and happy, so at death shalt thou awake from the fever-dream of time to the life of Heaven, and to the eternity of good.' Then the eyes set, as the stars go down, or else *my* eyes closed on them to open on another and a celestial dream. I heard a silvery rustle of pleasant voices, and saw a white-winged troop of angels; and lighting up the radiant brow of one, were the beautiful, clear eyes of my guardian spirit. Methought they hovered around a *death-bed*, waiting the *birth* of the angel; and as they talked, it seemed to me that this *death* was the *second birth* spoken of in the Scriptures—that as the body is born into the material world in the first birth, so the soul is born into the spiritual world at death—the *second* birth—that the body must be delivered of the soul before the soul can inherit the kingdom of Heaven. I realized then how death was the entrance into a vastly higher life. Mother, it is one thing to hear this said over and over again, until the

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words have no meaning, and another thing to realize it as a truth—as the new revelation of a truth."

Imogene paused and then resumed: "So I floated about in the atmosphere of that silvery dream—bright, radiant, dazzling as a mist of liquid diamonds—and still the sun of that celestial union was the clear-eyed angel, showering rays of light as he moved. Such were the blissful visions of my reviving life."

Imogene stopped again. Day was dawning now. The early sounds of awakening life began to be heard. Turkeys rustling out of their roosts in the trees close by the window, cocks crowing, geese cackling, and the muffled sound of cattle rising from their lair in the grass; and still Imogene paused, trembling, as it were, upon the verge of her revelation. And her mother silently pressed her hand.

"Mother, often by my bedside sat a form whose very presence diffused an atmosphere of health around me. Often my dry, hot hand was clasped by a large, soft, cool palm, that seemed to have the power of allaying my fever. This was before I could converse, mother; and then at last a voice fell on my ear—a voice so full of melody,—oh, of *more*, of faith, hope, love, of subdued joyousness—that my heart, which had lain torpid or frozen through all the enthusiasm of my hero-worship, my heart now stirred within my bosom like a new being, awakened by, vibrating to that sound. And, mother, when that gaze, and voice, and touch were absent from my side, my life would sink, struggle, rise and sink again, the dark water of death surging around to engulf me. And my spirit would flutter over the surface of Hades like a dark bird over a darker sea. But when that hand and touch came again, it summoned me back to life—to Heaven. So, vibrating between death and life, doubt and faith, fear and hope, gloom and joy, my convalescence advanced; and ever I could hear of an angel of restoration, who went about with healing on his wings among the sick, the sinful, or the desponding."

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"Speak without metaphor, *if you can*, Imogene. Who, then, was this missionary?"

"He, too, I heard, had left his books and entered the army as a lad, or rather, I should say, followed the army, for his post was always in the tents of the ill and dying, or upon the field, among the wounded, exposed to all the dangers of battle, yet never mingling in it. When the war was over, he returned to his books, to leave them soon, when a pestilence broke out in the city; and again his post was by the bedside of the sick and suffering, and such success attended his efforts, that many superstitious people believed his power to be miraculous; indeed his medical skill was great, and the greater part of those he attended in the twofold capacity of physician of mind and body, recovered. It was faith in his *almost* miraculous skill, that had summoned him to our Convent."

"But WHO, then, was this missionary?"

"Ah, mother, have you not divined? This gifted son of God was—*Claude Vellemonte!*"

"Our young pastor?"

"Yes."

"Imogene, you are fantastical. Why here in our quiet neighborhood, Mr. Vellemonte has wrought the same miracles, if miracles you would call the wholesome effect produced by his fine manhood—that healthful, beautiful, strong and potent harmony of body, soul, and spirit, that invests the possessor with almost miraculous power over the nerves, and hence over the minds and bodies of less perfect beings."

"He seemed to be charmed against 'the arrow that flieth by night, and the pestilence that walketh by noonday.'"

"Well, my child, well, what has this to do with your—your secret—your *sin*?"

Miss Summerfield shuddered within her mother's embrace.

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"Every thing, every thing, mother! This man became—is *now*—the day-star of my life. I loved—I love him *still*. Yes, with my whole body, soul, and spirit, with my whole being. He became—is now—the central life of my heart, the soul of my soul, the sensorium of my spirit, that part of me which shall be immortal—or I am crazy!"

The silence of the mother here was complete—absolute. A long pause ensued, and then she groaned out, rather than spoke—

"A priest at the altar! Oh, God, the sacrilege, the horror, the woe! Lost, lost child; *why* did you not struggle with it? Why did you not cling to your fidelity to Dangerfield?—to your enthusiastic hero-worship, rather? Why did you not wrestle with this terrible sin?"

"*Wrestle*, mother—preserve my hero-worship, mother? As well might night wrestle against the dawning of morning. As well might revelers, by keeping their torches alight, hope to put off the sun from rising, as I try to keep out this love by clinging to my hero-dream!"

"Oh, lost, lost, girl!"

"I said it was bootless to struggle with this growing power, mother; but yet I *did struggle*—and suffered! I suffered! Mother, I had a fine vital temperament when I left home, had I not? My forearm measured twice the size of my wrist. I had a fine complexion, too. See me now—flesh all dried from me, consumed in the fervid heat of my—*remorse*. Oh, in chapel, after my recovery—in chapel, I have set through a service, without once lifting my eyes to the altar, knowing, feeling that but to look upon him was guilt—feeling, even in the love of his voice, a keen joy, a poignant, piercing, thrilling delirium of joy, quickly avenged by a horrible remorse. I absented myself from church; but can one escape from sin? No, no. The fever and the ague, the burning and the freezing of alternate joy and remorse, of anguish and ecstacy, convulsed my soul

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even in solitude. Mother, mother, I am not exaggerating. This destroying excess of emotion was stronger than the strong words I have used to express it; yet I was not insane—this was a delirium of the nerves—a frenzy of excited passion—but not insanity; for though in this fever, flesh and blood were fused and dried away, yet never was my mind more active, more clear. I kept away from church, under the excuse of indisposition, which, indeed, was the truth, as my looks must have testified. Do you understand me, mother, that it was *remorse* which I suffered from *most?—remorse* for feelings that I did not or could not subdue. A sense of awful guilt—of awful sacrilege! Oh, mother, I was very nearly frantic; the more so, that I dared not unbosom myself to any one. I who for trifling error suffered such compunction that I had no rest until it was off my mind by confession and absolution, I now bore this burning sense of deepest guilt, and dared not cleanse my soul of it. Mother, with their clear-eyed charity and sympathy, the good sisters suspected that my malady was rather mental than corporeal, and so they tried to ease and cheer me; and lastly, mother, as the very climax of my trial, they sent Claude Vellemonte himself to talk to me. I made an excuse, and declined to receive him. Then, mother, I wrote to you, expressing a wish to return home; you came and brought me here. I tried to banish every thought, every memory of Claude. I prayed, fasted, tried to lose myself in study; tried to uproot one image in my heart, and plant another there. In vain, mother! I tried to look on Colonel Dangerfield as I had looked before—to love and venerate him—to believe I owed to him my very being. Oh, worse than vain! See, mother, what remorse has consumed my heart for treachery to my betrothed husband—for my impious, my sacrilegious love for an anointed priest of God! And when, after months has passed, months of criminal love and consuming remorse, and

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I had nearly withered to the ruin I am now, we met again, suddenly, unexpectedly, at the bedside of my grandmother. When I met his eye—when he touched my hand—it was like a lightning stroke! The blood stagnated in my heart—I reeled—and for a moment lost myself." She paused, and then resumed very gently, in a lower, quieter key, and in a thin and silvery clear tone: "My mother, do you think I have been mad? Yes, since I left the convent, since my return home, I *have been mad* at times—sometimes frenzied with such a poignant sense of guilt, that I have thought in this sacrilegious love, I had committed the unpardonable sin—the sin against the Holy Ghost; and then, indeed, I was often near betraying myself by breaking out into actual raving madness. Oh, often when you and others thought me so cold, so quiet, my superficial composure covered an internal storm that threatened each instant to break out in open madness. Therefore, mother, when you touched the subject of my secret anguish, therefore I had to escape, for my more than life—my sanity; for I was in momentary dread and danger of losing the slight but perfect self-control I exhibited. There was but a paper wall between me and raving madness. And I knew if this was but once burst through, all was over with me. I knew if I should lose my self-command, I should also forfeit my self-respect, and the respect of others. And, with all my guilt and remorse, I was haughty still. Mother, I dreaded to meet *him* more than death and perdition. I absented myself from church; and when he came to the house, I kept out of sight. I did not expect him here at the dinner-party; he came, and therefore I was taken by surprise. But, mother, now the mystery again, for after the first shock of my nerves had passed, his glance, voice, and touch had a magnetic power of tranquillizing me; he affected me *now* as he had in the first hours of my recovery from death and sickness. Mother, I know not

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the spiritual mystery of what I next experienced, but it was this: I read God's mercy in his eyes—heard God's blessing in his voice—felt God's love in his touch. You saw how cheerful I was, mother. I retired to rest, and then came a reaction, a demon-dream, from which you awoke me. Verily, 'we war not with flesh and blood, but with powers and principalities of darkness.' But, mother, that wholesome influence of yesterday evening has given me strength at last to confide in you, and I feel better for it. Speak to me, dear mother."

Mrs. Summerfield sat silent for a long time—with her hands clasped together upon her knees—with her eyes strained upon her hands, and a look of unutterable anguish on her brow. She was appalled by what she, like Imogene, looked upon as a sin of the deepest dye, for which earth scarcely contained a parallel or heaven a pardon.

"Speak to me, dearest mother. Tell me now what I am to do, and I will do it."

"Oh, lost, lost girl! You say that you were not mad until after your return home. Alas! you have been mad from first to last: possessed of a devil one might almost think."

"Patience, dearest mother; look on my poor worn face, and you *will* have patience."

"Oh, Imogene, Imogene, this is the bitterness of woe."

"Look at me, dearest mother."

"Oh, Imogene, my child, would that thou hadst died in thy cradle, in thy innocence."

"Oh, that I alone could suffer now, my mother."

"Oh, Imogene, would that I could suffer for thee. I *alone*. Would that I could *die*, if that would cleanse thy soul from its black guilt."

"ONE has done that for me, mother; calm yourself, mother—tell me, what shall I do?"

"Oh, Imogene, the tender arms of the holy mother

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church are ever stretched out in mercy, in supplication, to her erring, her sinning, and suffering children. Your brilliant worldly prospects have vanished in darkness, Imogene, and with them all my earthly hopes of happiness. No matter for *your* lost splendid prospects, or my lost happiness, they weigh lighter than a feather against the heavy weight of this enormous guilt. Repent, confess, expiate—unless thou wouldst be wretched in the next world as in this. Seek the confessional on Sunday after vespers, and pour this tale of sin into the ear of Father Burleigh. God and all his saints and angels be praised for the comfort of the confessional. There, poor sin-crushed child, thou must go. Imogene!"

"My dearest mother!"

"I am half crazy with trouble. I have no confidence in my judgment just at this moment; but yours is an awful sin and must have an awful expiation. Imogene, I need scarcely demand it—yet—promise me that whatever the expiation may be that he assigns you—you will not shrink from it—you will go through it."

"Oh, I will, I will; however severe, however repugnant, however galling! Nay, the *more* severe, repugnant, galling, the more readily will I accept the penance—as I hope for pardon—as the Lord hears me."

"Amen! Embrace me, Imogene. Nay, child, weep for yourself, not for me. I am not well now, Imogene, but—but, I shall get over this."

The sun was now up and shining broadly and brightly into the chamber. The mother and daughter, sorrowful but calm, and understanding each other, separated to perform their morning toilets. As Miss Summerfield opened the door of her mother's chamber, leading out into the hall, a dark form suddenly sprung away and fled down the passage too swiftly to be recognized in the dusky hall, where the window blinds yet remained closed. It was with a

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feeling of vague foreboding that Mrs. Summerfield now sought her room.

That morning after breakfast the remaining visitors departed, leaving the family at Red-Stone Hall to the quietness of their domestic circle.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CURSED WITH SUCCESS.

Vaulting ambition doth o'erleap itself,
And falls on the other side.—*Shakspeare.*

Now in despite of pride
'Twere worse than bondage to become his bride;
Oh that this dotage of his breast would cease,
Or seek another and give mine release.—*Byron.*

SINA HINTON had outwitted herself if ever an intriguante did; she had done too much and too well; she was cursed with too much success. Wishing to banish the daughter completely from her father's heart and home, she had exiled Ardenne, broken the heart of Winny, and so opened the bosom of Squire Darling for the reception of his suffering child: that was failure the *first.* Then, having wished to supplant that banished child in the home, heart, and fortune of her father, she had played her part so well, that instead of adopting her as his daughter, the fat and rosy old squire must needs fall desperately in love with her and woo her as his wife. Lastly, having essayed through the morbid conscience and guilty fears of the priest, to obtain a perfect command of him, and through him of his most powerful parishioners, she had overdone the thing so completely as to terrify the poor old man into dotage and imbecility—thereby rendering him unfit for her use.

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Now, could Sina have kept herself the pure abstraction of diabolical intellect that she had been before, she had yet possessed the satanic power of working out of all these difficulties, and profiting by her past mistakes. But under the influence of a human love, however little it might deserve the name, the demon-girl lost much of her power. And this was the rise and progress of Sina Hinton's weakness. From the first moment that she had set her eyes on Colonel Dangerfield, his martial figure, handsome face and gallant bearing, had strongly attracted her. For some time she resisted this fascination and resisted it successfully; not because he was the betrothed of another, and it was morally wrong, but because he was the betrothed of another, and it was useless and dangerous to her own peace and prospects. Therefore she wrested her thoughts from this perilously charming officer and fixed them upon her plans of personal aggrandizement. So time passed; but as it passed she found out an estrangement between the betrothed pair, and with the newly-revealed possibility her hopes arose, and with her hopes her passion; and with her passion her scheming began. Sina Hinton was always a regular attendant at church. It was not likely that a young lady so *point device* in matters of propriety should neglect public worship. Colonel Dangerfield from—not any very fervid religious feeling—but from a habit of childhood and youth, not to be broken now, was always punctual in his attendance on divine service. His pew was quite on the opposite side of the building to that of the Summerfield family; but it was side by side with Squire Darling's pew, of which, since the marriage of Winny, the infirmity of the old lady, and the illness of the squire himself, Miss Hinton was the sole occupant. Now, as Colonel Dangerfield would sit in that pew so cold and stern, he would sometimes catch a pair of large, dark, tender eyes fixed in mournful sympathy upon him, which would drop their long lashes upon a crimsoning

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cheek quick as detected. Such beautiful eyes, they were vailed from his sight only to haunt his memory. Hush—he would not whisper to his own *heart*—he would not listen if his heart whispered it to *him*—that there was any thing but accident in what made that corner of the pew where he could lean at ease and *see*, without looking at, those shadowy eyes—*so comfortable.* Nonsense! there was nothing in it; *that* corner fitted his back, and the *other* the opposite corner, was somehow—*left-handed*—I know not *what*, unless it was to Sina Hinton's soft dark eyes. But sometimes when the Summerfield pew on the other side of the church happened to be empty, Miss Hinton would prefer to sit there; and somehow or other, he would find his old position uncomfortable, and a change to the "left-handed" corner of his pew an inevitable necessity to rest himself. There was nothing in *that* either. It was very natural he should get tired of one position after awhile, and as to his turning around like a needle to the magnet of Sina's dark eyes, *that* was preposterous. He had known Miss Hinton a year, and it was too absurd to think of falling in love with her *now.* True, however, he had never seen those haunting eyes till lately. The third Sunday, Sina Hinton purposely absented herself from church to give him a chance of knowing how it would feel to miss her. And in truth, *that* Sunday—it must have been because his new suit of broadcloth was not a good fit, "those cursed tailors are so awkward,"—but *no* seat in the pew was comfortable. He tried *both* corners, each of which was infinitely worse than the other. Then he tried the middle of the pew, which was no better; and with all he was afflicted with a creak in the neck and an obliquity of vision that continually turned head and eyes in the direction of the front door. This grew a little better, however, as the service commenced and progressed. I think that sermon did Colonel Dangerfield much good; the seed this time fell upon good ground and

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brought good fruit, as you shall presently see. The text—"For I was sick and in prison and ye visited me not," and the sermon by the inspired and eloquent Claude Vellemonte was upon Christian charity and brotherly love. Immediately after the sermon, my colonel gets into his carriage and is driven toward home. But after being driven eight miles on the road, and within one mile of his own magnificent home—when he came to a cross-road leading into Oak Grove, he calls the coachman and tells him to turn to the left, with the benevolent intention of visiting and cheering Squire Darling, then laid up with his bruises.

He drove up to the front door, alighted, and entered the hall. Sitting reading in the hall, was Miss Hinton. A quick flash of malign mirth, triumph and joy, irradiated her face as she saw him, and then it quickly passed away. Rising, she met him with her own peculiar grace, and invited him into the parlor. He spent an hour with her there,—he thought it was only five minutes. Then she sent to see if Squire Darling had awakened from his mid-day sleep. And soon the squire came hobbling in. Colonel Dangerfield was pressed to stay to dinner; and Colonel Dangerfield—the sermon fresh in his mind—kindly staid; nay, he did more, he spent the whole afternoon and evening, and rode home by starlight, having first promised to come frequently—a promise that he performed faithfully. Now, be it remembered that our squire had not Miss Sina Hinton's lynx eyes, and swift and sure apprehensions—*he* knew no more than the man in the moon of any estrangement between his niece and her betrothed. If they did not hurry themselves in getting married, he thought it was because they were not quite ready, or rather, perhaps, he never gave the subject a thought at all. At all events, his impression of Colonel Dangerfield was that of his being a married, or half-married man, and therefore safe; for, believe me, no other young man could

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have visited his house so frequently, without exciting the jealous suspicions of the mature lover.

It was not until his visit to Oak Grove, and upon the day of the dinner-party, when, missing Colonel Dangerfield from the company, he had been led to put some questions to Mrs. Summerfield relative to the reason why the gallant colonel was not present; why the marriage did not come off; when it was expected to take place, etc. By her replies—cautious as they were—he learned to his consternation and great alarm, the estrangement between Dangerfield and Imogene. And his suspicions once aroused, they fairly outstripped the truth; and now he believed that Miss Hinton, in the spirit of coquetry, had willfully and wantonly come between the betrothed couple, and wiled away the affections of the lover from his mistress. Oh! what a generous rage he was in. He swallowed it, he kept silent. Not for the world would he have breathed one word of his suspicions to Mrs. Summerfield. No; he meant to avenge his own wrongs, and those of Imogene, in silence, himself. He meant to punish the coquette—but—as he meant to marry her also, not one syllable would he breathe against her good name—not one word that would lower the high opinion he knew his sister held of her. Oh, no; Squire Darling, with all his coarseness, was far too proud for *that*. His prospective wife must be actually *sans reproche*, even if she did not merit to be. She had wronged him, and he would deal with her for it; but his wrong and his vengeance should be a secret between himself, his love, and God. He took a cheerful leave of his sister and niece, making them promise to visit him soon at his house; he bade an affectionate adieu to his mother and little daughter, telling them that as soon as ever Winny should be able to leave her room he would come to fetch them home; he bade good-by to Sina Hinton, saying that the carriage would return in the afternoon to convey her to Oak Grove; and so he left Red-Stone Hall. Miss Hinton

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had promised Mrs. Summerfield to remain there that day until sunset; and at sunset the carriage having returned, she also took leave of the Summerfields, and left for Oak Grove.

It was bright starlight when the carriage rolled through the gates and up the straight gravel road to the front of the old gray Hall. Miss Hinton skipped out and tripped up the old mildewed stone-stairs, quite innocent of any suspicion of the scene awaiting her.

Old Uncle Kill met her in the Hall, and bowing low, said: "Miss Hinton, marster 'sired me to 'form you soon as you comed home, Miss, how he'd 'quest de favor of your comp'ny in his own 'partment."

"Which, Achilles?" asked Sina, cheerfully; "the library, his study, the parlor?"

"De library, Miss Hinton, if you please; I'll light you up."

"Go on before, then, Achilles," said Miss Hinton, stepping lightly after the old man up the stairs.

It was a long, snug room, carpeted, and with a great oak fire on the hearth; Squire Darling was standing with his back to the chimney—standing in the very same attitude the recollection of which used to amuse poor Winny so much—when Miss Hinton entered the room. He stepped forward to meet her immediately—and taking her hand, drew her up before the fire. Standing with his back to the fire he set her before him, placed his hands upon her slight shoulders, and looked down full in her face. Sina was not annihilated, nor did she lose her presence of mind—she drooped her sweeping black lashes over her dark elfin eyes, and compressing her lips and holding her breath, forced up as charming a blush of bashfulness as ever beguiled a simple country squire out of his senses. Ah, bewildering was Sina, then, with her slight but elegant figure perfectly shown by the closely fitting blue-black satin dress—with her long

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black lashes sweeping the now crimson cheeks, the crimson lips compressed, and the long black ringlets drooping from her brow and falling upon her small but beautifully rounded bust.

"Come, look up at me, Sina; I want to see your face."

Sina raised her large dark eyes with an expression of brooding tenderness to his face, to his eyes. He slightly trembled, like an agitated great jelly, at the witchery of that challenged gaze.

"Well, sir! I am looking at you!"

"Oh-o-o-o-oh! um-m-m-m!" groaned, blowed the squire with the perspiration starting on his brow.

"*Well*, sir! I'm looking at you!"

"I know you are, you little witch. I feel it, you little galvanic-battery! Drop your eyes this moment, and let go my hands; do you want to kill me outright?"

"*You* have *my* hands, sir."

"So I have. I swear I did not know the difference. Sina! witch! sorceress! imp! elf! what kin are *you* to Satan!"

"You are my cousin, are you not, sir?"

"Yes, you Flibbertygibbit."

"Then, I guess he was my uncle!"

"Hum. I shouldn't wonder if there was some impudence behind that, if one could get the time to make it out. Sina."

"Sir!"

"Why the zounds is it, that when in a fit of very righteous indignation, I send for you—to take you to task—to lecture you, you look but in my eyes, and I am disarmed; you speak to me, and I am your slave. Oh, Sina! I cannot scold you now—I forgive you, Sina. *Love me! do* love me, child, my beauty. My sweet, wild bird, do not flutter away from my bosom; *love me!* take my whole fortune—take every thing. I have every thing you want; only *love me.*

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Oh, Sina! are you ambitious? are you fond of distinction, of admiration?—as it is indeed but natural that a young vivacious girl like you *should* be. Oh, Sina! if you are, I will satisfy your ambition, your girlish love of distinction and admiration to the very utmost. You shall have the handsomest establishment and equipage in the whole State. I will pull down this old house, Sina, and rebuild it on a scale of magnificence that shall eclipse 'The Soldier's Rest' —the famous seat of Colonel Dangerfield—(set fire to him). Oh, Sina! he does not love you as I do. You will find that out yet—he who can trifle with Harriette, hold on to Imogene, and coquette with you—he does not love you as I do. For what woman do I seek, but you? Every face looks flat to me but yours—every woman seems common-place to me but you. Oh, Sina! do not treat my heart like it was a piece of tough beef-steak. You do you bloody-minded little tyrant! You *cut* it this way, and *slash* it that way, and *pound* it tender, and then lay it on the coals to *broil*, giving it a *turn* sometimes—Fizz-z-z! Oh, Sina! have mercy! mercy!" said the possessed squire, sinking exhausted into a great arm-chair—his fair brow and fat rosy cheeks streaming wtth perspiration and tears, as he held out both arms to his little evil sprite. "Come, oh come! give me a kiss; my heart is hungry—come to my bosom once; my heart is starving. I'm a fool, a jackass! I know it well while I'm talking."

Miss Hinton wasn't Titania; she hadn't taken the love potion, and was not enamored of the jackass. She didn't "come." On the contrary, she, walking composedly to the other side of the room, pulled the bell-cord, waking a peal of rings, and returning to the fire-place, drew a chair to the corner, set her feet upon the fender, propped her elbow on her knees, and leaning forward dropped her head upon her hand, in an attitude more weary than graceful.

"Now then, what the mischief is *that* for?" asked the

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squire, dropping his arms, sighing, or rather blowing violently, and gazing at her with watery red eyes.

Before she could reply, a servant entered the room in answer to the bell.

"Is tea nearly ready?" asked Miss Hinton.

"Yes, Miss."

"Tell Minerva to have it up in this apartment, and to make haste, for I am weary and nearly exhausted."

"Yes, Miss;" and the man disappeared.

"Are you, Sina, my dear—are you so tired? Come here, Sina, my little girl—let me lay your little black head on my bosom, and I will rock you until you are rested. Come, Sina! my heart is bursting—give it some relief!"

And Miss Hinton, edging cautiously around the room, reached the back of the big chair, and dropping her hands upon his shoulders, while he could not see her witching countenance, cooed as follows:

"My dearest, dearest friend—my benefactor—my more than father—believe me, I esteem and venerate you beyond all others on earth. I will be your daughter, your maid-servant. I will live with you always, and serve you faithfully—but—but—" here Sina dropped her forehead upon the back of the chair; "but *do not* talk to me of love. It is not right. I am a great deal too young for you, and too silly. How would your sister like it?"

"D— my sister!" growled the squire.

"Do not say so—how indeed would your *daughter* and *son-in-law* approve it?"

"Satan fly away with my son-in-law. What has *he* to do with it? Come! I see how it is!—you wish to put me in a rage! '*Son-in-law!*' I am astonished at you, Miss Hinton! Never allude to that pernicious fellow again!"

"I beg your pardon, sir. Believe me, it was inadvertent. I am extremely sorry!"

"*Son-in-law! he!* the d—l! you've added another reason to the many I have already for hating him!"

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"Oh, sir, forget it! I am very much grieved!"

"I'll forget it, Sina, if you will come round here and sit on—"

"Squire Darling! my dear friend, my more than father—"

"Zounds! don't keep telling me that! '*more* than father!' presently she'll say I'm her *grand*-father!"

"My kind, noble *benefactor!*—listen to me—listen to me—I will be a daughter to you—"

"FURIES! Who wants you to be my *daughter? Daughter*, indeed! *My* daughter and somebody else's *wife?* Ha! set you up with it, and somebody else, too. No; you shall be *my* wife and anybody else's daughter you please. Come; you have raised a conflagration in my heart, Sina. It is not to be extinguished with a few tears. You should not have done it. Young girls should be careful how they creep into a heart like mine; it is very apt to close upon them—to become their prison—yes, and their inquisitorial fiery dungeon at that. You must be my wife, Sina. I will positively take no denial; none. Come around here, Sina, and sit by me. Come! Why the girl seems to have no confidence in me; *none.*"

"Squire Darling, I will come and sit by you; but you must remember that you are a Virginian gentleman, and that no gentleman of this chivalrous State ever was known to offer insult—I mean to give distress—to any woman orphaned, helpless, unprotected, and his guest."

"Come, Sina; come, sit by me. I will try to keep my senses, if I can. Oh, Sina, Sina, Sina, Sina, you ring in my ears like the burden of a tune. Come!"

She came around, and drawing the chair to his side, sat down.

"I must talk to you right seriously, Sina, if I can keep my head from splitting. You've bedevilled me, girl. You have been with me two years. During that time you have

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been to all intents and purposes mistress of my house and servants. During all that time I showed you all the respect due from a host to his lady guest; did I not?"

"Oh, you did, you did!" said Sina, clasping her hands with a touching air of gratitude.

("Yes you *did*, you ugly old brute; you made love to me all the time as much as I would let you,") was the mental addition.

"But, Sina, you pretty little kitten, you wouldn't leave me alone; not you. You'd come purring around me, and putting your little velvety paws upon me, and nestling close to me, and singing softly to me; and all in such an innocent, kittenish, bewitching way, that—that—confound me, if I can help catching the pretty black kitten to my bosom, let her bite and scratch and claw ever so much;" and, forgetting Virginian chivalry, honor, gallantry, hospitality, he suddenly caught the girl to his bosom, nearly crushing all her little bones in his bear-like hug, and half suffocating her with kisses, exclaiming between them:

"Aye, scratch and claw, my little bramble-bush. Spit and snarl and bite, my little kitten. Hey, my little sal-ammonia, but you are sharp—you are piquant—you are exhilarating! Ha, I wonder if these sweet lips—no, these fragrant poignant lips of yours, are not that fountain of youth at which I shall recover youth again."

"I'll, I'll *kill* you!" exclaimed the enraged and half suffocated girl.

"Kill away, my tigress; kill away, my sprite. Oh, it is so good to be bitten and scratched by you. It must be heaven of heavens to be killed by you."

Sina suddenly ceased to struggle, burst into tears, and dropping her head on his shoulder, sobbed violently. And he ceased to worry her; and, stooping over her, stroked the disheveled hair from her brow and said, soothingly:

"Sina, my little girl, *hush*—don't weep. I love you,

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Sina; my love is honorable, if ever man's love was. It seeks to do you no ill, nor wrong; it seeks to enshrine you in honor and safety. I *must* marry you, Sina. Make up your mind to it, my little girl, for there is positively no alternative. I *must* marry you, my little girl; but that will be the very first and last arbitrary act I ever did or ever will show you. Oh, Sina, I will be so good to you if you will only be my dear little wife. Child, I will love and cherish you more tenderly than man ever did woman before. Such a good husband as I will be to you, Sina. Your every wish shall be a law to me and mine."

All this time Sina was lying in his arms, her head upon his shoulder, sobbing as if her heart would break, while he continued, speaking softly:

"Child, hav'n't you heard the old ladies say 'it is better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave?' I know my rival, Sina. It is Dangerfield (curse him). Little girl, will *he* love you as I shall? I am not only faithful—I am *faith*. And he a young, gay, handsome, celebrated officer of rank in the army. Sina, he'll never be true to you. You'll have half-a-dozen unworthy rivals. No, he'll never love you as I do—never; and it is more necessary for a woman's happiness that she *be* loved than that she *loves*. Come, Sina, forgive my roughness. I loved you so dearly. God help me! it was an irresistible temptation—the Virgin pardon me—to have you sitting there with your hands folded, and your face sparkling between your black ringlets turned up to mine. Forgive me, Sina; with all my rudeness and all your beauty nothing would have tempted me to treat any woman so whom I did not intend to marry in spite of all Heaven, earth and hell."

"Oh, my dear benefactor, forgive *me*," said the wily girl, "for I have been violent too; but you don't know how dear a—never mind. You—you will kindly give me a few days to think. Dangerfield your rival! My dear benefac-

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tor, how easily these mysteries are unraveled when one has the key to them. Think now of colonel Dangerfield seeking me to induce me to use my influence with Miss Summerfield in his behalf—for Miss Summerfield has discarded him, while he is still passionately attached to her."

"Dis—! What, *him?*"

"Yes; but this is *almost* a breach of confidence, which neither the colonel nor the Summerfields might like. I tell you this to tranquillize you; that is my only excuse. Pray do not mention it to any of the family unless they first name it to you."

"Dis—! *Well.* Now, Sina, say. Oh, Sina, say you'll be my dear little wife, won't you? Don't keep me on the tenter-hooks of suspense any longer. Don't torture me again. Come, speak; you *will*, won't you?"

"My dear protector, please give me two days to think of it; will you?"

"Well, well; if I must I must, without any sort of doubt. Here they are with the tea."

At that moment Nerve and Kill entered, with two waiters, to arrange the table. As soon as tea was over, Miss Hinton excused herself and retired—while Squire Darling communed with himself to the following effect:

"What Sina says may be all very true, and in the main I believe it *is;* but then, again, I do not like the fellow poking about here so often; and if Imogene has really discarded him—whatever could possess the girl to do it!—why, the next thing he'll be for consoling himself with some other woman. And what woman so likely as Sina? Finally—confound him—I owe the man nothing. I am under no obligation to receive the man here. My house is my castle—and—hospitality be sunk where the sacredness of hearth is concerned. Ergo, I'll forbid the fellow the house; and if he wants to know the reason, I'll tell him." And the next day proved the squire quite as rude as his word.

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Miss Hinton was sitting at an upper front window the next morning, when Colonel Dangerfield rode up. He bowed low as the mane of his horse in answer to her nod and smile of welcome. When he alighted, she left the room and came to the head of the stairs, from whence she heard his brisk knock, saw a servant go to the door, heard his deep-toned voice inquire, "Is Squire Darling at home?" and the false answer, "No, sir." "Let Miss Hinton know, then, that I am here," said the colonel, preparing to enter. But the man held the door in his hand and replied, in the face of the truth, "Miss Hinton is not at home, sir. She left here this morning, with my master, to go to Red-Stone Hall." Miss Hinton's face kindled with indignation; and she made one bound with the intention of running down stairs to refute the falsehood, when she felt her waist clasped from behind, and the hard voice of Squire Darling saying:

"No you don't, my darling. What you told me last night I believe to have been true; but then it related to the past, and perhaps the present, but gave no earnest for the future. 'Fore-wit is better than after-wit'—'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'—and—'it's foolish to lock the stable-door after the steed is stolen.' Ergo, I practice 'fore-wit;' I keep my 'bird in the hand;' and I secure my stable-door *before* 'the steed is stolen;' so be easy, my little girl."

The fell girl's brow grew black as night as she turned away from him to conceal her rage, and sought her chamber. Squire Darling staid home all day. That night, after the family had retired to rest, the dark girl stealthily left her chamber, (securing the door on the outside,) passed silently down the stairs, out of an end door, entered the stable, saddled a horse and rode swiftly from the house.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SOLDIER'S REST.

——A palace beautiful to see;
Marble porched, and cedar chambered,
Hung with damask drapery:
Bossed with ornaments of silver,
Interlaid with gems and gold,
Filled with carvings from cathedral
Rescued in the days of old;
Eloquent with books and pictures,
All that luxury can afford;
Warm with statues which Pygmalion
Might have fashioned and adored.
In the forest glades and vistas
Lovely are the light and gloom;
Fountains sparkle in the gardens,
And exotics breathe perfume.—*Mackay.*

LET me pick up some of the dropped stitches in this complex net. Colonel Dangerfield, immediately after his last recorded interview with Miss Summerfield, had hurried home. The next morning he had written hasty notes of adieu to Mrs. and Miss Summerfield, and set out upon a long journey. Only very recently he was supposed to have returned. He was now at "The Soldier's Rest," the modest name he had given to his magnificent winter-residence near Winchester. Since his return he had not once approached Red-Stone Hall. This, as we have seen, had filled the heart of Mrs. Summerfield with uneasiness, roused to anxiety, when he declined her invitation to dinner. Well it might be so in a place where domestic and social propriety of conduct is so strictly enforced and observed, and where a

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departure from established rules of manners is visited with the same severity as a dereliction from morals. It was well known throughout the whole section of country, that the heiress of Red-Stone Hall was affianced to Colonel Dangerfield; that she had been withdrawn from school to fulfill this engagement; that Colonel Dangerfield had made splendid preparations at "The Soldier's Rest" for the reception of his bride; and gossip about the costly furniture imported from London, Paris, and Constantinople, was circulated with the usual quantum of exaggeration, until curiosity was on the qui vive for the day when the imposing nuptials should be celebrated, and the magnificent mansion with its superb apartments, gorgeous furniture, and splendid decorations, should be thrown open to public reception and inspection. But days had chased days; weeks had slipped after weeks; months had followed months; and the second year had succeeded the first, and no silver-edged and silver-sealed cards of invitation summoned the neighboring gentry to Red-Stone Hall; and the perfect repose of "The Soldier's Rest" was unbroken—and what had befallen the wedding? The good people of Jefferson County, you may be certain, had something to talk about. The perfect sleep of "The Soldier's Rest" remained undisturbed; the gorgeous saloons, halls and chambers remained closed; all except the bachelor apartments of Colonel Dangerfield, situated in one of the back buildings. The curious passer-by, peering through the semicircle of lofty Lombardy poplar trees that surrounded the front of the lawn, saw only through their foliage a distant, broad expanse of glistening white marble, with row above row of highly polished, dark mahogany shutters, closely shut—the front view of the mansion white, cold, impenetrable and repellant as the brow of its lady elect.

But, as in the woman, could you have seen below that cold, severe surface, you would have shrunk away in horror, scorched and blinded by the fire burning there—burning

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more intensely, consumingly, for its very suppression—so in the mansion, could you have passed those marble walls, and through those polished oak galleries, halls and saloons, you might have come to a room where the light of day was excluded, where among the deep shadows sat or moved a tall, dark form—like a bad thought in a black heart—a dark form, gloomy and glowering, upon whose countenance the lurid glare of a red coal fire cast up a weird, demoniac light, giving the passion-plowed visage a yet more fell and fatal aspect; and you might have fancied that this white and glistening marble palace was the snow-covered surface of a volcano, and this murky room, with its deep black shadows and lurid red light, was the centre, the forge of the burning lava, and this dark giant moving among them the demon-prince of the earthquake and fiery irruption.

And there might have been more truth than fancy in the conceit; for in that house, in that room, in that form, in that *heart*, lurked, burned the spark of a passion, should it blaze out, fatal as ever fiery flood that, bursting from the bosom of a volcano, buried a city in hot lava—deeply wounded self-esteem—jealousy that had outlived the *love* that first gave it birth.

Now, as he walked about the floor—the fire casting his long, black shadow up to the ceiling—he seemed restless, anxious with the expectation of somebody, or something; he would go to the window, look out into the night, return and trim the fire, walk twice or thrice across the floor, open the door and peer out into the darkness. At last the light, swift fall of a palfrey's hoofs fell on his ear, and then starting, he seized a paper match, applied it to the fire, then to the wicks of a chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and lo! the scene was changed as by enchantment. It was no longer a baleful, black figure, moving fearfully amid black darkness, made visible by gleams of lurid red flame. The rays of the chandelier poured down in a thousand rainbow-colored

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streams of dazzling light, upon the form of a very handsome martial looking man in the prime of life, arrayed in a splendid undress uniform, and standing amid a scene of luxury a sultan might have envied. Of all the gorgeous apartments in that magnificent mansion, none could compare with this small room for the very perfection of its adornments. The chandelier had just blazed around, when the door opened, and Sina Hinton stood in the midst of the scene; her small, slight figure attired in a closely fitting crimson satin, her jet black hair pendant in a mass of glittering spirals down her beautifully rounded shoulders, her thin, fierce face sparkling with excitement. Colonel Dangerfield made an impulsive start, as though he would have caught her to his bosom, but with a quick, fierce gesture, she repelled him. Casting her riding hat with all its plumes down upon the carpet, she threw herself into a luxurious chair, and lay there, her crimson drapery warmly glowing in the light of the chandelier, her form and face, palpitating, quivering, sparkling, blazing not unlike a small mass of fire, or a grenade half exploded, that still continues to jet and sparkle. Colonel Dangerfield checked the first impulse of astonishment, composed himself, and approached her soothingly:

"Why, Sina, Sina. What is the matter, Sina, Sina?" he said, cautiously approaching his hand to her head, and deprecatingly, furtively stroking her head, as you would that of a fierce, beautiful pet cat you wished to caress, yet feared it should bite. Why then, Sina, Sina, my little salamander, my little fire queen, what is it?" Who has set a match to my little powder-magazine now? Who now has fired my little grenade?"

She struck off his hand sharply. He folded his arms across his chest then, and stood quietly and silently before her, watching her still glowing, sparkling, scintillating with agitation.

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"Recollect yourself, Colonel Dangerfield, and respect *me*," she said at last, fiercely.

He remained in the same attitude, patiently waiting for her to recover herself. At last, inspired by a bright idea, he turned to a small but elegant table, upon which stood several cut-glass decanters and wine-glasses, and pouring out some wine, brought it to her. She pushed it away, saying:

"No—would you add fire to fever? Water!"

Obediently he brought a glass of water, and taking it, she quaffed it at a draught. This cooled her somewhat. Returning the glass to him, she said:

"Dangerfield, bear with me. You should not cross me in a mood like this—when the wild-cat is stirred up in me, as it has been to-night."

"Compose yourself, Sina."

"Forgive me—another glass of water; thank you. I am steadied now—*I hope*. Dangerfield, you got my note?"

"Yes, my delightful little torpedo, I received your note; and have prepared my poor, lonely apartments as I best could, for this bright presence."

"Ah! Mary, Virgin Mother, am I never to be free from this sort of address?"

"What mean you?"

"Colonel Dangerfield, I have been indiscreet in coming to your house; yet if you knew the motive that has driven me to throw myself thus upon your magnanimity for protection—you would excuse—you would pity—succor the defenseless orphan girl!" wept Sina, bowing her head till all her bright ringlets fell, vail-like, over her witching face.

"My dearest girl, explain yourself; do, Sina. Come, I am your friend—confide in me," said he, kindly taking her hand, and looking in her countenance.

Sina turned her face away—stooped till her ringlets fell and vailed it, and then said, in a half-stifled voice:

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"*How* shall I tell you? *how* shall I tell you with this gairish light glaring around—with your eye upon me; how, oh, Virgin Mother, shall I tell you, *you* of all men?"

"Nay now, I entreat you speak, Sina. Come, speak *low;* I will listen."

"Ah, Dangerfield, can you not imagine the only thing that would drive me from Oak Grove to seek advice and assistance of you? What, no answer! Shall I have to tell you then—" continued Sina, in a smothered voice, burying her face in the cushions. "That, that, that Oak Grove, that Squire Darling's house is no longer a fit and proper home for me. There, it is out."

"Sina, Miss Hinton, you surprise me beyond measure."

"Is not my position a cruel one? Oh, is it not?"

"My dear Sina, my dear young lady, could you not have sought shelter with Mrs. Summerfield."

"Ah, sir, do you not see the reason why I could not; the brother and sister—the father and daughter—the uncle and niece, so long estranged—so recently reunited; would you have had me, for any selfish motive of my own, however excusable, expose that wrong which would have made more mischief between them?"

This was said with an air of sincerity that would have deceived an angel—it thoroughly gulled Colonel Dangerfield.

"True, most true, my high-hearted girl."

"Therefore, sir, I came to you, as the only friend I knew. I come to ask you to procure, among your numerous acquaintances, a place as governess in some gentleman's family for me—and to do it quickly; and to consider with me how I shall get off—what excuse I shall make, so as not to expose Squire Darling to his sister's indignation. Can you assist me in my design?"

"Undoubtedly. But, Sina, I love you—love you! Let my love shield you from this servitude you would enter—ah, hear me, Sina!"

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"Colonel Dangerfield, it is late; I must return home," said Miss Hinton, rising and picking up her hat.

But Colonel Dangerfield caught her hand, and gently forcing her back into the chair, said:

"Not yet, Sina, and not alone; I must ride with you when you go. And now you must listen to me. I love you, Sina."

"Sir, I must depart."

"Sina, my bird, you must *not* yet. Sina, I love you, love you; and *you* love me! Tell me that my affection is not altogether indifferent to you."

"Sir! sir! those are words you should not speak, I should not hear!"

"You love me, Sina!"

"Let me depart, sir!"

"You *do* love me; every word and gesture proves it! Now, tell me why these words are wrong?"

"Oh, sir, for many reasons. Miss Summerfield—"

"'Miss Summerfield!' Well, you said there were *many* reasons; what others?"

"Sir, if Miss Summerfield were out of the question, you are a wealthy man, I a poor girl."

"Why, so much the better! Come, Sina, any more reasons? Come—come—come;" and with every word he approached his hand toward Sina's curls, as though he would have played with them; but Miss Hinton drew off and repulsed him. *Never* had Sina permitted him so much as to lift her dark little hand to his lips. "I assure you, dearest Sina, you are a very inconsistent girl—you are at once the most prudish, and the most indiscreet girl I ever saw! Come, now, I challenge you to set up another reason for me to overthrow. Ah, you cannot do it!"

"Yes, sir, I can," said Sina, turning suddenly, with one of her dazzling, blinding smiles. "Yes, sir, I can—a rule my mother taught me before I ever left her."

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"Good! Your mother's rule—what was it?"

"Ah! I will not tell you!"

"I insist upon hearing it. Come, your last reason for not responding to my love; your mother's rule."

"*Never to talk of love till my lover talked of marriage!*" said Sina, with an arch, bright, bewildering smile.

Colonel Dangerfield grew serious all of a sudden. "Hum. I think I do not misunderstand you, Sina. Tell me, this old sinner—this—curse him! I beg your pardon, Sina. He was *very rude*, was he?"

The blood rushed to Sina's brow.

"*Rude!* he pursues me with a loathsome suit—to become his wife! He follows me from room to room; my own chamber is scarcely sacred in his eyes; he denies himself and *me* to my own visitors; he stays home all day to prevent my visiting or receiving company. If I ask to go out, he tells me that one horse is lame, another broken-winded, a third has cast a shoe, and the blacksmith is sick, and so on. I cannot be alone with him a moment that he does not press his suit. But as for being *rude* to me—*that* is the extent of his rudeness as yet; but I fear him. He has no Colonel Dangerfield's fine sense of honor. I fear him horribly. I must leave his house. And that reminds me, sir, to tell you that I must now bid you good-night."

"A moment, Sina. I wish to understand you. Why did you not take day-time for this visit?"

"Because I was so closely watched. I am no more than a prisoner at large at Oak Grove."

"Sina, listen to me, and reply to me as you list. I will dare to be candid for once. You are an exceedingly fascinating girl. You impress me with a keen joy almost painful in its excess."

"*That's* exceedingly candid! Lovers have been *that* candid with ladies since Adam courted Eve!" laughed the elfish girl.

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"Patience! you will have no cause to complain of my candor; listen then. You know that there is a betrothal between myself and Miss Summerfield that is not *yet* broken off. I *have had* a very strong attachment to Miss Summerfield. I esteem her more highly than any lady I know. I should be prouder of her as a wife than of anybody I know—am I *candid*, Sina?"

"Well, I have a vague notion that you *are*," laughed Sina.

"Good. Now *I* have a vague notion that unless I find Imogene's affections have strayed—(here Sina's eyes scintillated)—that betrothment may be consummated in marriage. But, in the meantime, my God! I love you so much!—what am I to do?"

"Pity this is not Turkey, sir, since you love us both; for then you could marry us both," said Sina.

"Witch! I did not say I loved Imogene exactly. I love *you*. Listen—hear me out, Sina. If this betrothment is broken off—and it *will* be, if, as I said, Imogene's fancy has strayed—(here again Sina's eyes blazed) then, in that case, Sina, I am a free man, with a free hand to offer you; and in that case, also, Sina, I had rather have given fifty thousand dollars than that Squire Darling had ever been rude to you, or that you had entered my house to-night! My wife should be as far above suspicion as the stars above the earth. Do not turn away and weep, my poor girl! You were unfortunate, have been indiscreet, that is all. You are so brave and pure, Sina, that you do not see lurking danger, lurking sin. Come, cheer up, my own Sina, and tell me if you know—and prove it if you can—that Imogene has been unfaithful to her contract. Say, Sina, can you satisfy me of this?"

"And do you think, then, that I am so base as to betray my friend? Let me depart, Colonel Dangerfield, for it is clear that the longer I stay here, the worse you think of me."

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"No, I do not; the longer you stay here the *better* I think of you, my generous but wild and imprudent girl! Come, then, Sina, I will attend you home, and see you again soon."

"Alas! *where?* For be you sure I shall not venture here again."

"Nor would I have you, Sina. I will visit you at Oak Grove."

"Ah! no! no! no! *not* at Oak Grove. *You* would be denied admittance, and *I* should be persecuted afresh!"

"Then we must settle where to meet as we go along," said Colonel Dangerfield.

They left the luxurious room. He placed her in her saddle, and leaving her there, went and got his own horse in preference to calling a servant under all the circumstances, and throwing himself into his saddle, he rode swiftly around and rejoined Sina. A half hour's brisk ride brought them to Oak Grove. At the gate, Colonel Dangerfield said:

"Now, Sina, I must see you once more soon. My dear girl, let me come *here;* that is the straightforward and proper course."

"No, no, *not* here! not *yet!* Stop! I shall be at vespers Sunday afternoon. I shall wait in our curtained seat near the confessional used by Father Burleigh. *That* is a safe and most unexceptionable place of meeting, for I shall stay after vespers to confession, as it is Father Burleigh's Sunday in the box—the Sunday after next being Mr. Vellemonte's. Do not *you* come into my pew until after vespers, and after the congregation has left. Good-night! good-night!"

"A kiss, Sina, one kiss!"

"No, no; I save such marks of affection for my husband, whoever *he* shall be," laughed Sina, flitting through the gate, and casting back a smile and glance so full of glamour, that Dangerfield liked to have leaped the fence after her.

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"Ah!" smiled the wily girl to herself, "I think I shall bring about something at this chapel yet. I heard Imogene's pretty love story once. I'll see if I can't hear it again in company. It is too good to be enjoyed solus. And as for Dangerfield, he must be the company, because seeing and hearing is believing." Then she stabled her horse, and softly entering the house, passed up the stairs.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VESPER HOUR AT SACRED HEART.

SUNDAY came—the Sunday upon which Imogene Summerfield was, according to promise, to unburden her bosom of "the perilous stuff" that had so long lain and festered there. Miss Summerfield was serene, though still melancholy. The corrugated brow, the strained eye, the collapsed cheeks, and angular lines of anguish, were no longer visible; nor was her sleep that preternatural ecstacy it had seemed before. She was in her chamber that morning, preparing to accompany her mother to church. It was the habit of those families who lived ten, fifteen, and even twenty miles from Sacred Heart, to leave home very early on Sunday morning, or immediately after a very early breakfast, and go to church to stay all day; that is, through the early mass, the sermon, and the evening vespers—taking with them one or two servants and a hamper of provisions. And it is one of the queer and picturesque sights peculiar, I believe, to the old and sparsely settled counties of Maryland and Virginia, to see the small country church, in its grove of trees, with carriages and horses tied to almost

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every tree, and, after the sermon, negroes lounging about, or feeding horses, and families at lunch in their carriages, or even in their pews. Mrs. Summerfield, besides a hamper of provisions for her own family, always took a bottle of crusted port or of champagne, and some rare dainty besides, for Father Burleigh; and frequently after vespers were over in the evening, Miss Mattie Smilie would come to her pew door with her round face, meek, chastened smile and pleasant voice, and press Mrs. Summerfield and "Miss Imogene" to stop in at the cottage and take a cup of tea and some of her nice egg-pone to warm them before their ride home, and as frequently Mrs. Summerfield would smilingly accept the affectionate invitation. That little Miss Mattie was so neat and nice and fragrant, though I think somehow or other the dear old soul never got any new clothes. In church you might always see her in a faded light calico gown, "clean as a penny" and "neat as a new pin," and a faded, light-colored clean shawl, and an old-fashioned clean straw bonnet, with a washed and ironed ribbon on it, with a blue white-crimped full cap border all around her dear old edifying face. And there was always that smell of fragrant dried herbs about her, for Miss Mattie's clothes, house, table, and bed-linen, when not in use, were literally "laid up in lavender," or bergamot, or sweet marjorum, or sassafras, for her clean old chest-drawers and presses were full of them. And, indeed, in my infancy, when I heard for the first time of the "odor of sanctity," I thought it had reference to Miss Mattie, her fragrant dried herbs and her saints' relics. When in her extreme old age I once visited her, and she hung round my neck an *Agnus Dei*, a small pink satin heart stuffed, and in the very middle of the stuffing a relic the size of half a rice grain, saying it was the bones of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr, and that it was a "protection against temptation," it smelt so fragrant of lavender and bergamot, that saints' bones and

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aromatic dried herbs entered my head together, and have never been separated since. She used to make me fancy, too, in spite of all the glistening and bristling new finery of a country church, that light-colored "fady" calicos, and old poke-bonnets with washed and ironed ribbons, were the very neatest and sweetest dress in the world. One thing I felt sure, that Miss Mattie was the very cleanest, neatest, most fragrant little fat and rosy old lady I ever *looked at*, and the mildest, meekest, most composing and refreshing old lady I ever *talked with*. She had but one trouble in the world, and that was, as she used to say, with her good smile, "Poor Sammy and his ways"—meaning (if you have "forgotten to remember" the relation) Mr. Sammy Smilie, of Harper's Ferry; and she only regretted her poverty, because she would have no money to leave to pay for having masses said for the repose of Sammy's soul after his death.

No bright young child, no beautiful and good girl ever brought more quiet sunshine into a church or dwelling than did Miss Mattie, with her edifying manners, as I said, half bonhommie, half beatitude. She would mildly and smilingly exhort the rich to trust in God and try this nice soup, in the same sentence; and talk of the joys of heaven, and the juices of this nice new ham so strengthening to the stomach and so good to *coax* a lingering appetite, in the same breath. She would kneel down quite naturally and pray for the conversion of people's souls and the cure of their colics in the same tone. I am not sure when her chickens had the pip that she did not make it a subject of fasting and prayer. I knew very well, when she lost her well-worn and faded thread gloves, she fasted and prayed every day till they were found, for she told old Nerve so, who replied to her:

"Well! I should be afraid to bother my blessed heavenly Marster about such trifles."

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"But, honey, it *wasn't* a trifle. It cost me three fippenny-bits, and I had not had 'em over two years, and they were jest as good as bran new except that there was about six or seven, or indeed for that matter it might have been *eight* little darns in 'em; and that—was—all, and neither do I think that the Blessed Lord and the ever blessed Virgin *is* indeffant to what grieves their childun—even gloves—because you see, honey, *I*, sinful poor creature as I am, pity even a little duck with the gapes, or a fly drowned in the water, and is the Lord any less loving than what I am?"

But this is a flagrant digression—I must stop. Though I could go on much further with details about the old priest's housekeeper, very interesting to me, certainly, but not so much so I fancy to you; and I somehow regret that, at the end of this tale of real life, I shall have to drop Miss Mattie without having made you acquainted with half her meek and enduring virtues.

Mrs. Summerfield had put her basket of lunch into the hands of her servant, with directions to stow it away in the box of the carriage, and to mount himself, speedily, and be ready to attend them to open the gates, and then she had gone up stairs to see Imogene before their departure.

"How do you feel now, my dearest child?" she asked, stealing her arm around her waist as she stood before a glass arranging her hair.

"Calm, mother; very calm."

"I am pleased, Imogene; there is one thing I never mentioned to you."

"Well, mother?"

"That night upon which I woke you up, was not the *first* night I had watched by you while sleeping."

"My dear, dear mother! did I merit such goodness at your hands?"

"Yes, Imogene, my love, why not. Besides, Imogene, I will tell you—what *now* I fear you will never prove, in

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your own self, namely—that a mother's love never slumbers nor sleeps. But, Imogene, there at your bedside I witnessed a phenomenon I cannot understand."

"Well, mother?"

"Perhaps you can explain it."

"I do not know—let me hear it."

"You—but tell me first, how did you usually *rest*, Imogene?"

"Delightfully, mother. My life, indeed, was 'two-fold'—sleep had its own world."

"Ah!—go on."

"Full of bitterest remorse and most insufferable anguish as my days were, mother, I could not tell you how delicious were my nights, my dreams—nor how the blissful visions of the night enhanced the misery of the next day. It was a psychological mystery, mother. I had no control over my dreams. I have believed in the possibility of controlling dreams, but *I* could not do it. I would pray, read, fall asleep repeating a prayer, and instantly be transported by sleep into another world—into a higher, deeper, broader, fuller sense of existence, into the midst of visions that would seem far more real to me than does this waking life."

"And the specific nature of those visions, Imogene?"

"It is difficult to recall them in all their glory, mother—mother, they leave on my mind a vague memory of unutterable happiness, for which I should nevertheless feel unmitigated regret, for—listen, mother, mind, in all these I had *one*, but *one* companion—the one that I have made my idol—the priest, Claude Vellemonte!"

"Oh, Imogene!"

"Listen, mother. As soon as I fell asleep, he stood by my side; we wandered, hand-in-hand, through marble halls, cooled with sparkling fountains; perfumed with myriads of flowers; musical with millions of birds; and thence, into the saloons, hung with richest and rarest paintings, with

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niches filled with marble statues; through, into chambers of more splendor and luxury than Eastern poetry and magnificence could imagine; and thence again, into gardens of more than ideal beauty and exuberance of exotic vegetation; and through orchards of rich and blooming tropical fruit; into vineyards, where the purple grape, like clusters of rubies, hung amid leaves of emeralds; out into fields of ever fresh verdure, cool and green, and gently undulating off to the distant light-blue, transparent horizon; through forests of mighty trees; and at every step the vision extended, or our souls expanded, and the horizon grew wider, and at last we took in the whole earth, from pole to pole, with its mighty oceans, studded with green tropical and with icy arctic and antarctic isles, with its navies and seaports; the broad continents, with their long rivers, lofty mountains, burning volcanos, nations, kingdoms, towns and cities. All these passed in panorama before our vision. Yet, mother, in all this, my happiness—the very climax of my joy was—*by my side!* Can I tell you how we *talked?* The earth floated off below, as we soared into space. Then, looking down, we saw the floating globe. That vision of the earth, seen from above, is distinct in my memory. The great globe of forest-covered land, and isle-studded water, with the Northern icebergs glancing in the sun. I never realized how little room the cities, towns and villages—all the dwelling-places of men, took up in the green earth, till I saw it in my dream, floating below me, like a ball of green and variegated land, sparsely enameled with cities; and of blue water, thinly dotted with islands. Then, mother! what shall I tell you of the glory of the heavens, as seen in my vision—worlds—oh, as far more glorious than *this* as the sun at noonday is more glorious than a taper. I tire you, mother."

"No—but that will do—I understand now the happiness of your sleep. I have heard physicians say, that some minds, absorbed in sorrow all day, will, by a natural reaction, a

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merciful law of our being—pass into another set of ideas, and dream blissfully at night. I sometimes thought of that while watching you."

"Ah, my dear mother, how you lost your rest for your brain-sick, heart-sick child. But ah! the sin of my blissful dreams was—their traveling companion."

"No more of that, dear Imogene. This evening you will cleanse your soul of that involuntary sin. Come, Imogene, it is time to go, my dear."

"Sina, I shall go with you to church, to-day," said Squire Darling to Miss Hinton, that morning at breakfast.

"Shall you, sir?" asked the young lady.

"Yes, I *shall;* and I shall stay all day, and return with you after vespers."

"Do you not think it will be too much for you, sir? Recollect, you have not ridden so far yet—nor have you yet attempted to sit up all day without your mid-day nap."

"Tender creature! I can take my mid-day nap in my comfortably cushioned pew, between morning and evening services, as well as not—so please to have a chicken fried, and some ham, and tongue, and pickles, with bread and butter, and a bottle of sherry, put up in a basket, Miss Hinton."

"Certainly, sir."

"By-the-way—have you seen Colonel Dangerfield lately, Sina?"

"No, sir."

"When did you see him *last?*

"Upon the morning—Friday morning, I believe it was, when you denied yourself and *me* to him."

"Is that intended as a reproach, Sina? Yes, I *did* deny you to him, my little dear! my tormenting little joy! my sweet, sweet Sina. Do you think, my pet, my little black bantam poulet, that I am going to let that cockerel of a young officer plume his gay feathers, and strut about *my*

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barn door. No indeed, Sina. And besides, pretty little black-haired Sina, I am going to church with you to-day, to take care of you. Ah, Sina, I shall have twice as much joy of you, my little crab-apple, because I know that fellow in the moustaches and epaulettes is dished, confound him. No, Sinetta! I do not mean *once* to lose sight of you, until the law has given me a property in you, and a right to break any civil or military coxcomb's head who dares to know whether you are handsome or homely. What!—the mischief!—a girl I have had in my house two years, and loved all the time—for a blue-and-buff fellow, with a couple of epaulettes, to come—to intrude—to invade my house, and want to rob me of its dearest treasure, its brightest ornament. No, indeed. The d—l fly away with all dandies, civil and military, I say. They are in league against the unity of my home, and the peace of my heart. One sonnetizing, musickizing fellow carries off my daughter, which was bad enough; and now another Signor Don Monsieur Orlando Moustachio wants to carry off my sweetheart, which is infinitely worse. Thunder and lightning!—it's a wonder I had not broke the fellow's head when he came here last Friday morning!"

"Squire Darling, I told you before, and I tell you again, Colonel Dangerfield is not, and never *can* be your rival."

"And I know better, pepper-pod, you little viper, you! I know that every unmarried man in the parish is my rival. Haven't I eyes?"

"Use them then, sir, and see a little, pale, hard-favored girl, whom nothing but her black eyes and black hair redeems from utter hideousness."

"Ah, good! Nothing but black eyes, and in them a spell, a glamour, a power that would wile an archangel from heaven! You take a raking aim at a man with those eyes, and he is perforated through and through, annihilated, and reels and staggers like a ship before it settles and

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sinks. Nothing but your—*eyes!* Good! the bird has nothing but her song; the sphynx nothing but her riddle; Jupiter nothing but his thunderbolt; and you nothing but your *eyes!*"

"It seems to me, sir, that you are angry with me without a cause. Your manner toward me is as full of hatred as of friendship."

"Ah, Sina, I am provoked. Set fire to that fellow!—Why the furies didn't I shoot him!"

"Indeed you terrify me, Squire Darling."

"Well, then, let me marry you, Sina, and it will all be over. Come, what hinders, this morning, in church, before mass. Come, Sina, let it be so. Oh, Sina, I will take such good care of you; I will treat you so well—love you so dearly. Come, Sina."

"Squire Darling, you promised not to mention this subject to me again for four days."

"*Four days!* By the d—l and all his angels! *four* days, when it was only *two!* When the four are out, she'll say eight—then sixteen—and next, thirty-two!"

"No, I will not, sir, indeed I will not. It *was* four days. They will be out on Wednesday evening, and on Wednesday evening I will give you an answer."

"*You will!*"

"Indeed I will!"

"Without fail?"

"Without fail."

"We'll see. Come, it is time to be off to church."

Miss Mattie, in the Sacred Heart parsonage, was getting ready for mass, mildly lecturing Harriette between times, upon sundry improprieties and disorders of dress and manners, to which the merry girl was particularly addicted. And as soon as she was ready, she went out in her old-fashioned straw-bonnet, and faded buff-white shawl, and

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frock, and well-thumbed mass book, and pocket-handkerchief scented with a sprig of lavender between its folds, to meet Mrs. Summerfield, whose carriage she saw approaching the church. She smilingly greeted that lady as she alighted from the carriage, and she affectionately saluted Imogene, whose high, pale brow, dark, serious eyes, and serene lips, whose whole sweet, solemn countenance, wore the expression of rapt religious abstraction and exaltation. As if absorbed in high and fervid devotion, and fearing to break her train of thought and feeling, Imogene merely silently pressed Miss Mattie's hand, as she passed on, and immediately entered the church and her pew. Mrs. Summerfield followed, and took a seat by her side, accompanied by Miss Mattie, who passed on to her own pew at the upper end of the church. These were scarcely seated, when another party entered, namely: our stout and fair-haired squire, strutting pompously on, wiping the perspiration from his rosy face with his scarlet bandanna pocket-handkerchief in one hand, while under the other arm was securely tucked his little evil sprite, Sina, in her tight-fitting, fiery crimson satin, and long, jetty ringlets, and perilous eyes. The dangerous eyes were cast demurely down, and the long, black lashes and ringlets drooping. On strutted our squire, clipping her little arm close to his side, with his head erect, shoulders thrown back, chest expanded, and every gesture breathing determination and defiance, *to* what, or *of* whom, who could tell? Sina, possibly. He passed Sina into his pew, and closing the door, seated himself by her side, and between her and everybody else, just as the altar door opened, and Mr. Vellemonte appeared in his surplice, followed by six lads, as sacristans. Soon the sublime chant of the *miserere* commenced, followed by the *oremus*, and then the holy mass. The sermon from the text, "Love one another," was eloquent with that spirit of light and love that pecu

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liarly distinguished Mr. Vellemonte's preaching. At the close of the sermon, when he came down from the pulpit, and passed on before the altar, his countenance was elevated, irradiated with a high, celestial inspiration. "His face was as the face of an angel." Imogene, too, had caught from him the spirit of religious ecstacy, and sat there in her pew, rapt in a sort of inspired trance. When the congregation were retiring, little Miss Mattie, breathing of bergamot through all her clean, faded clothes, came up to the pew door to ask Mrs. Summerfield if she would not come into the cottage and stay to vespers. There was a fine fire in the cottage parlor, and she was going to get a cup of strong coffee, as the day was chilly, she said. Now Mrs. Summerfield knew that the contents of her hamper would be a valuable addition to the meagre cottage fare, and therefore she at once accepted the invitation, giving orders to her servant to take the hamper into the parsonage. Squire Darling now came up, with his little inflammation of the heart still tucked under his arm, and greeted his sister and niece. He and his brain-fever joined the cottage party, and ordered off their basket in the track of Mrs. Summerfield's hamper. Miss Summerfield requested to be left alone in the church. Her wish excited no surprise. It was not unusual—such retirement for self-examination and prayer in the time of Lent. So Imogene was left to her meditations in the lonely church, while the rest of the party migrated to the cottage parlor. In their route thither, they passed several parties, like themselves, coming from a distance, and staying all day at church. Dear little Miss Mattie smiled and nodded meekly, as she passed them, looking very much as though she would like to have them all along, but that was impossible, the tiny cottage not having the capacity of a large hotel for accommodation; so Miss Mattie had to content herself with promising mentally to invite some among them next Sab-

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bath, and all, each in their turn. Squire Darling followed last of all, with his little ringletted infatuation still hanging on his arm.

"Ah, my little carditis, *he* wasn't here to-day. Isn't it a pity, now? My dear little blaze, I'm sorry for you; you burn quite blue upon the occasion."

"I do not in the least understand you, Squire Darling."

"Don't it—the innocent! *Colonel Dangerfield* was not at church this morning."

"Was he not? I did not observe."

"Oh—ho—ho—ho—ho! As if one could believe that."

The fat squire was in an angry, jealous, mocking, yet triumphant mood.

Miss Hinton dropped her long, black lashes, and long, black ringlets, and looked persecuted and patient. She was temporarily delivered from her tyrant, at the pic-nic dinner-table in the cottage kitchen.

Evening came. Vespers were over. The congregation were departing. Squire Darling, with a look of huge gratification, tucked his beautiful crimson sin under his arm, and prepared for a start, saying brutally:

"Ah, my dear cardialgy,* not here this evening either. However, misery likes company, my dear ruby; and there is Miss Harry, whose heart is breaking, too, in the same cause; and there is my superb niece, looking like a martyr infatuated with the stake. Come along, cardialgy, let us go home."

"Thank you, sir; I have accepted an invitation from Mrs. Summerfield, to return with *her* to-night," said Miss Hinton, with a look of malice.

"The d—l you have!" exclaimed the thunder-struck and enraged squire.

It was no use though. His anger was perfectly impo-

* Heart-burn.

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tent. He was tempted to go to his sister, with Sina under his arm, and say to her: "Here, *this* is the cause of the fatal estrangement between Dangerfield and Imogene." But, as I said before, in his greatest fury, Sina's honor was not forgotten. He would bitterly upbraid and brutally tyrannize over her himself, but he would not expose her to the slightest reproach from any other. So the squire bolted his fury, and took leave of Sina and his sister, telling her that he should send the carriage for Miss Hinton early the next morning. Mrs. Summerfield went again into the cottage, to wait until her daughter's religious exercises were over. Father Burleigh went into the confessional.

Miss Summerfield—her pale brow still luminous with the glory of inspiration, passed on to the church. The inside of the church—the splendid altar—the gorgeous pictures—were all glorious in the golden lustre of the setting sun, that, pouring through the western windows, yellow-flooded the whole scene. The altar occupied the centre of the north end; the pulpit the right-hand corner, and the confessional the left-hand. Both these were hung with scarlet drapery, and glowed hotly in the sunshine a few moments—and then—even as Imogene entered the confessional—the sun's disc dropped behind the near mountain, and the whole church fell into sudden gloom.

It was about this time that Sina, expressing a wish to retire to the church and prepare her soul, by self-examination and prayer, for the sacrament of confession, left Mrs. Summerfield. It was deep twilight gloom, when she softly glided in her serpentine motion up the aisle, and slipped into a closely-curtained box, near the confessional, and never used but as a place of strict retiracy for meditation, previous to confession.

She had been here perhaps five minutes, when the curtains were parted, and another person entered. It was Colonel Dangerfield. He pressed her hand in silence, awed

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by the holy stillness of the place, and passed on to the seat she indicated on the other side of herself, and nearest the confessional. He sat down and turned to speak to her, when she raised her finger to her lips, in token of silence, just as the profound stillness of the church was broken by the low tones of a deep, rich voice, saying, "Bless me, father, because I have sinned." He recognized Imogene's full, round tones, in the opening of the ritual. There was a pause, disturbed by the solemn but inaudible voice of the aged priest. Colonel Dangerfield, with a start of surprise, got up, would have left the pew, but that Sina put her hand upon him with an imploring look, and pressed him down into his seat, just as Miss Summerfield's low, melodious voice was heard again in the comfiteor; but the words were nearly inaudible, until she was heard to murmur, "I accuse myself of having given to the creature the love, the adoration, the worship due only to God." Then her voice was again inaudible during the five or ten minutes that her rich, deep tones trembled onward in her history. Then her voice ceased; there was a dead, dead pause. Again Colonel Dangerfield started to leave, but Sina, turning very pale, leaned against the front of the pew, barricading the door, and signed to him that she felt extremely agitated, horrified by what it appeared *she* had heard, though *he* had not. She signed to him to wait a moment, until she should have recovered herself. He dropped again into his seat, with a dark frown of impatience. This eaves-dropping, although it was, on his part, and he believed on Sina's, quite involuntary, and although he actually, as yet, had heard little or nothing, was nevertheless, extremely repugnant to his sense of honor. Now the deep, stern, awful voice of the priest arose—yes, deep, stern, and awful as that of the Judge at the last day—falling upon the ears of the stout soldier, and of the little demon by his side, with awful impression—with the thun-

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der of the final doom. The first words of the solemn denunciation were lost, and nothing was heard distinctly, until he said:

"And lastly, oh thou pernicious girl, since thou hast dared, in defiance of God's blighting curse, to lift thy impious thoughts and sacrilegious eyes up to the Lord's anointed—the holy one of Israel—the beloved son of Christ—the gifted young brother whose exalted piety has endowed him, in the opinion of the people, with the gift even of miracles,—*hear thy sentence!* Through thy very sin shalt thou do penance—through thy very sin shalt thou have added, to the fires of consuming remorse, the shame of utter self-abasement and of utter humiliation! *Hear!* To this pure and holy man shalt thou go, and to him, who, in the untarnished Image of his Maker, is of too pure eyes to behold iniquity—to *him* shalt thou confess thy impious, thy sacrilegious love, that in his utter loathing of thy degradation and thy guilt, thou mayest grow to apprehend its enormity; and from him shalt thou receive the sentence of penance he shall think most necessary to expiate thy atrocious crime, and to save thy else too surely lost soul from utter perdition!"

A long low scream of "Mercy! mercy!" a heavy fall—and then Colonel Dangerfield, starting to his feet, upsetting his little devil in his haste, and rushing to the confessional, raised the fainting form of Imogene Summerfield, and bore it from the church, and into the cottage.

* * * * * *

An hour afterward, Imogene opened her eyes. The shame, the terror, the anguish, were all gone. Her face revealed a heavenly serenity—nay, indeed, it seemed that while her body had been lying in insensibility her soul must have been in heaven, and received some divine inspiration; for when she opened her eyes, her countenance beamed with a celestial glory, even on the stern old priest bending over her

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bed, and her tones were full of earnest love, when taking his hard, old hand between her own, she said, "I thank you for making *him* my judge!' I accept it. To him will I reveal my whole soul—from him receive my sentence—and suffer it, whatever it may be, with oh! how much joy."

"Sina, I am free! Sina, will you have me?"

"Yes!"

Then, Colonel Dangerfield folded the wily syren to his bosom, imprinting on her lips the very first kiss she had ever permitted, deeming himself "very blest."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DEMONIAC.

I am disgraced, impeached, and baffled here;
Pierced to the soul with anger's venomed spear;
The which no balm can cure but his heart's blood,
Which breathed this poison.—*Shakspeare.*

TRUE to his promise or his threat, Squire Darling had sent his carriage over to Red-Stone early the next morning; and as Mrs. Summerfield, preoccupied and abstracted, did not think to invite Miss Hinton to prolong her stay at Red-Stone, our syren had no alternative but to return to her hated home. As she was about to enter the carriage, a servant of Colonel Dangerfield's rode up and put a note in her hand. She opened it hastily and read:

Soldier's Rest, Monday, April 1st.

MY DEAREST SINA:—I have been thrown from my carriage and have been laid up all day with a sprained ankle—

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nothing worse, only that it prevents me having the pleasure of seeing my dear girl to-day, and waiting upon Squire Darling, as I intended to do, for the purpose of announcing to him our engagement. I am so dreadfully *ennuyee*, that I am almost tempted to ask my brave, indiscreet girl to come and pay me a visit; at least I certainly will not lecture her as before if she does, as 'circumstances alter cases.'

"Thine, longing to see thee,

"H. L. DANGERFIELD."

Miss Hinton put this paper in her pocket, and the carriage rolled on toward Oak Grove. Arrived at the fork of the road where the left-hand turn led to "The Soldier's Rest," Miss Hinton called to the driver:

"Uncle Kill! Uncle Kill!"

"Miss!"

"Turn down to the left; I have a letter to take from Red-Stone Hall to 'The Soldier's Rest.'"

"Eh! what! yes! Certainly, Miss; *what* was it you said?"

Miss Hinton repeated her order.

"Can't do it, Miss."

"*What!* how dare you, sir, disobey my order? Turn instantly to the left!"

"Sorry I can't obligerate you, Miss Sina; but ole marster's orders to fetch you straight home were very peremptolute."

"See here, sir! you insolent fellow!" said Sina, burning with rage, "turn immediately where I tell you, or you shall meet with severe punishment."

"That may be a doubtingency, Miss Sina, if I *don't;* whereas, if I *does* turn out with you, it'll be an absolutive certainty;" and so saying, the old negro put whip to his horses, and drove furiously toward Oak Grove.

Arrived there, Miss Hinton went into the drawing-room, and sent for Squire Darling. Squire Darling was having a conversation with old Kill. Poor old Kill! He thought

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by his literal obedience to orders, to merit his master's approbation. So it was with visible delight, that he related his little altercation with Miss Hinton, taking care to say, however, that he would very gladly have obliged Miss Hinton, if he could have done so without disobeying his master. Our stout squire fell into a rage with *Sina*, that positively threatened to end in an apoplectic fit. But with his habitual care for Miss Hinton's standing in the household, he relieved himself, and deluded and alarmed poor old Kill, by bursting into a fit of violent fury upon *him*, demanding to know why he did not mind Miss Hinton. His own commands were to be obeyed, it was true, *always* excepting when Miss Hinton's wishes interfered. *He* (old Kill) knew that. He ought to have his hard head broken. It should be done the next time such a thing occurred. Now we all know that had poor old Kill committed the mistake of taking Sina to "The Soldier's Rest," he would have virtually signed his own passport to the cotton fields of Mississippi. And, in fact, the old man still suspected as much himself: however, with a deprecating "reverence," he replied that he was very sorry to have mistaken his master's wishes; that it was not yet too late to remedy the error; that the horses were still quite fresh; finally, that he could then drive Miss Hinton where she wished to go.

"No, SIR! It is dinner time. Miss Hinton is also very much fatigued. I shall not permit her to go over all that ground again. Begone!"

It was at this moment that the message from Sina arrived, calling him into the drawing-room. He went in, putting a violent restraint upon himself, welcomed her home, and desired to be informed of her particular pleasure and purpose in sending for him.

"Colonel Dangerfield is indisposed at 'The Soldier's Rest.' I am the bearer of a letter from Red-Stone Hall to him. I wished to take it there at once, but your man,

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Achilles, refused to drive me thither. Now I wish you to give orders that I may go."

"Not for the world, my dear Miss Hinton. You are mad! A young lady visit an unmarried gentleman at his house! Upon no account, whatever. I will take the letter myself. Where is it, Sina?"

"Excuse me, sir. I must only deliver this letter with my own hand."

"Ah, who is it from, Sina? My sister? Imogene?"

"Squire Darling, it seems to me that you are cross-questioning me."

"Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" laughed the squire. "No, my dear Sina; but, in a word, I cannot send you to 'The Soldier's Rest' to-day upon any pretense whatever. Let the Red-Stone Hall folks find their own messengers. Any thing else, Miss Hinton, that I can do for your pleasure—not that, not that, my dear carditas. It is too much to ask of a man. What, the d—l! Are you so deeply disappointed at not seeing him at Chapel all day yesterday, that you must go and make him a visit to-day?"

Whether Sina Hinton's guardian demon deserted her that night or not, I do not know. Certain it is, however, that she was not one to brook control, or bear disappointment. The time was not ripe openly to defy Squire Darling, if indeed defiance would have served her turn at all. Be that as it might have been, at eight o'clock, Miss Hinton bade good-night to Squire Darling, and retired to her own room—not to stay, however. Very soon she cautiously emerged from the chamber, and creeping stealthily downstairs, saddled a horse with her own hands, and left the house as before, unconscious of a dark figure on horseback perseveringly dodging her course.

The same luxurious chamber, the same handsome occu-

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pant awaited our little villain; the only difference being that Colonel Dangerfield, in a gorgeous dressing-gown, reclined in a large, easy chair, covered with gold-colored satin, with his wounded foot resting upon a cushion.

"My dear, brave, imprudent girl, I knew you would come. But why then not come in the day-time, and with a proper escort?"

Sina explained, with luxuriant embellishments, the occurrences of the day.

"My dear Sina, to what a tyranny you are subjected. But take courage, Sina. As soon as I can get a boot on this cursed—I beg your pardon—I meant to say this *crippled* foot, I shall go over to Oak Grove, and paying Squire Darling the respect due him as your guardian, little as he deserves it, I shall ask leave to visit you at his house, informing him of our engagement at the same time. I do trust, my dear love, that I shall be able to come over to-morrow."

Sina exerted all her powers of fascination that evening, and with unprecedented success; never was a rational man more thoroughly bewildered, a Christian man more completely bedevilled, than was Colonel Dangerfield when Sina left him that night. Look where he would, or shut his eyes if he pleased, the image of a fiery and intoxicating sprite, in crimson satin, whose eyes were grappling-hooks, whose ringlets were nets and meshes, caught and entangled him.

In the mean time our little scamp pursued her way home, where a warm welcome was awaiting her, of which, by the way, she was quite unconscious.

Squire Darling paced up and down the long area of his library, cursing the lameness that still prevented his mounting a horse. Now he stood with his back to the glowing hickory fire; now he walked to the window and looked out into the night; now he pulled the bell-rope violently until

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the whole house resounded, and the whole grove echoed, bringing in a servant."

"*Has* Achilles returned yet?"

"No, sir."

"Curse him, he is very slow! Do you be on the watch for him, sir, and; as soon as he comes, do you take charge of his horse yourself, and send him, without the loss of a moment's time, to me."

"Yes, sir; any thing else, marster?"

"No; go."

The man withdrew.

"Satan snatch the fellow; what keeps him so long! Nine—yes, by Jove, *ten* o'clock, and he not returned yet."

He seized the bell-rope and gave it another succession of violent jerks. The man immediately re-entered.

"More light here; my candle is sinking in its socket."

"Yes, sir. Uncle Kill has come, sir. I hear his horse's hoofs galloping into the yard now."

Out of my sight, then, in double-quick time, and send him up here. Let *him* bring the candles."

"Yes, sir;" and the man withdrew.

In a very few minutes Uncle Kill entered the room bearing the lights.

"Ah, you have come. Set them on the chimney-piece. Now, then, you kept a watch over your young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"You followed her at a respectful distance—near enough to protect, yet not near enough to annoy, her?"

Yes, marster; no, marster—I means she never knowed nothin' 'bout my bein' on to her track."

"Be careful of your phraseology, sir. *On her track!* On *Miss Hinton's* track! What insolence is that?"

"I beg your and Miss Hinton's pardon, sir. I meant to say how she never knowed as how she had a faithful sarvant behind her a keepin of a watch over her for to keep off purl."

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"Very well; but now then, if it be in you at all to give a consecutive narrative, do it."

"Sar!"

"If you can tell a straight story, confound you, tell it. Where and when did you first see Miss Hinton after she left the parlor?"

"Yes, sir; at the ind door, sir."

"When? What hour?"

"At half-past eight o'clock, sir."

"Yes, by the devil's dam, whose daughter she is," muttered the squire between his teeth. "That was the hour she took leave of me for the night, saying that she had already kept me up beyond my time, (which was true,) and that she would then go to bed herself, (which was false). Well, sir, what then?"

"You see, marster, how it wur very dark, and I was a settin' underneath them there stone stairs as goes down from that there same ind door, and every singly soul 'bout the plantation wur gone to bed, 'cept 'twur you, marster, and me, and one other person. Last I heerd the door over 'bove my head open, and creak, and shet, and a soft pit-pat, like a little cat's steps, a comin' down the stairs; then I peeped out from underneath my hidin' place, an' I cotch my eye on to Miss Sina—leastwise, I mean—an' I swear to man, sar, it wur the Lord's blessed truffe—I seed in the black dark; and it wur so thick, black dark you might leant up against the darkness and gone to sleep—the darkness walled you up all around; 'deed it seemed like it wur not possible to get through it without cutting your way through the solid darkness with a strong axe."

"The d—l, sir; go on with your story."

"Yes, sar; yes, marster. Well, in coorse, I couldn't see Miss Sina, for there wa'n't a singly star in the sky; but what I *did* see wur—and it is the blessed Lord's holy truffe —*her two eyes*, large and shinin' like two stars near the

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earth, and moving along in the solid darkness like wolf's eyes; and that was all I could see of her."

"Be careful, you black rascal. Mind yourself and know of whom you speak. Reflect, sir, that you were ordered to follow that eccentric young lady, at a respectful distance, for her protection," said the squire, almost vainly trying to reconcile his system of espionage with the idea of perfect confidence in, and respect for, his charge, with which he wished to impress his household. "Go on, sir."

"Well, marster, she, I mean the young lady, sir, Miss Sina Hinton, passed on through the solid darkness without no light, 'cept 'twur her blazing eyes—beg your pardon, sir—on to the stable, sir, where she leads out and saddles a creetur that wur no less than Fleetwood, as she knowed wonned the goolden cup at the Battletown Races last fall."

"Yes; well!"

"She saddles of him quick as wink, jumps into the seat, and is off like a streak of lightnin'."

"Well, well; you followed her?"

"Yes, sir; yes, marster; but not on to the creetur I most in gineral ride, and that is what I wanted to 'xplain to you, sir, cause I never makes use o' the bloods, sir, 'cept in a case of 'cessity, more especiallary in the night-season, sir, cause—"

"Zounds, sir, go on with the narrative without flying digressions upon horse-flesh."

"Yes, sir; yes, marster. She *wur* progressin' on a flyin' peece o' horse-flesh, and that was the reason why I knowed Chally could never overtake *that there*, cause, you see, marster, as I often 'xplained afore, sir, that time Marse Edgar and Miss Winny—"

"Set fire to 'Marse Edgar and Miss Winny!' Where the jack-o'-lantern are you wandering now?"

"Yes, sir; yes. I was jest gwine to 'xplain how it wur all along o' Chally."

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"D—n Chally."

"Yes, sir; I say so too, axing your pardon, 'ca'se ef it hadn't o' been for *he*—"

"Thunder and lightning! What has all this about Charlie to do with it? Where did Miss Hinton go?"

"*Yes, sur.* She goed straight through the forest-road toward Soldier Res', sir."

"And then—"

"Then I saddled Lightfoot, sir, though he wur one o' the best bloods, 'ca'se if I had rid Chally—"

"Zounds and the d—l! If you say Chally again, I'll be the death of you. Come; what next?"

"I gallopped arter her, sir—hard as I could—till she must o' heern me."

"Blockhead!"

"No, I wur not; 'cause when I heern *her* stop to listen, I stops and turns softly side o' the road and goes into the woods till I heern her go on again. Then I thought, as there wur no turnin' for half a mile, may be I had better 'pend on to the dark an' ride swift past of her, an' wait fur her at the fork; an' so I *did*, sir, and she stopped when she heern my creetur comin', and stood still somewhere in the dark—some'ere 'side o' the road—tell I gallopped past. I got to the fork and waited under the trees tell I heerd her come sweeping past like a gale o' wind up the right han' road, an' then I knowed she *wur* goin' to the Soldier Res' for true, an' no whar else, so I followed after her soft and swift, an' kep' nigh to her, too, 'ca'se I wur on Lightfoot, where as ef I had o' rid my old creetur, Chally—"

"Fire and blood! If you go off on Chally again, I'll split you down."

"I didn't, sir. I didn't, 'deed I didn't go off on Chally, as I wur about to 'xplain; 'deed he ain't fit for to be rid no longer. I goed on Lightfoot, as I said, sir, 'case I had had 'nough 'perience o' Chally."

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"Humph! Achilles, you know what I am when I turn pale, and what I mean when I speak low. Now, mark me; tell me about Miss Hinton without once diverging from the straight line of the story—without once again naming Lightfoot, Fleetwood, Charlie, or any of your four-footed friends and acquaintances. Now, then, go on."

"Yes, sir. Well, sir, I keeps a-hind o' her all the way tell we comes to the glen; then I takes a short cut through the glen, and brings up underneath the poplar trees as circles round three sides o' the lawn. I ties my creetur in a hidy place, and runs 'long under the fence till I gets roun' to the back o' the house. The back gate wur open, an' I slips in an' goes whar I sees a light a glimmerin' through the 'netian-blinds o' a great big ind window, as I arterward found out wur Colonel Dangerfield's own room. So I hides myself underneath o' the vines o' the portico. All wur dark; all wur still. Presen'ly I hear a hoss step soff and muffly like. Then I hear somebody drap soff off the hoss and come light as a cat mos' to the groun'; nex' I sees two shinin' eyes comin' through the dark; then the door 'long side o' me opens, an' a blaze of light pours out jes as Miss Sina flits in, an' the door shets again. Then I goes 'round' and up the steps an' peeps through the keyhole, but the shiel' wur down so I couldn't see nothin' 'tall; then I tries to peep through the window-shutters, but I couldn't see a singly thing."

"Who the d—l, sir, authorized you to look through the keyholes and window-shutters?" angrily exclaimed the squire, though it is to be presumed that if old Kill had made any discoveries the squire would not have been averse to hearing them and profiting by his servant's eavesdropping. As it turned out a fruitless peeping, however, our squire could afford to indulge in a fit of virtuous indignation without loss.

"'Deed, sir, I thought—," commenced old Kill, excusing himself.

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"Oh, the fiend! What business *had* you to think? Well, and then?

"Then, sir, I comed away an' left her there, 'ca'se I thought how Colonel Dangerfield would be sartain sure for to see her safe at home."

"Let us see; what time was that?"

"Nigh as I could guess, sir, I think how it wur about nine o'clock. It tuk me jes about half a nour to go, and half a nour to come—only jes that much—'ca'se you see, sar, 'fore-wit is better nor after-wit,' and I had the fore-wit 'stead o' ridin' o' ole Chally I rid Lightfoot, 'ca'se you see, sar, I knows ole Chally's deblish ways o' ole—'ca'se, you see, sar, it wur along o' ole Chally—"

"That you are kicked down stairs, you infernal old villain," vociferated the furious squire, suiting the action to the word, and then throwing himself into a chair, while a deadened rumble-bumble-tumble was heard going slowly and safely down the carpeted stairs. Up jumped the squire with a sudden impulse, and going to the door, sang out:

"You, sir, pick yourself up and return here immediately."

"Yes, sir," said the old man, making his appearance.

"Look you here, sir. I was only trying you. *I* sent Miss Hinton on that expedition. A secret and confidential treaty with Colonel Dangerfield, which, as he is laid up in lavender with his sprain, and I am on the shelf with my remaining lameness—Miss Hinton, as the person most in the confidence of both, had to execute."

"Jes so, sir."

"There, then. Now never let me hear of this night ride again from you or *from anybody else*, for if you *do*. You know *me*."

"Jes so, sir;" and glad to get off, old Kill precipitately retreated.

After he had left the room the jealous and enraged man

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walked several times up and down, communing with himself as follows:

"Now, shall I call her here when she returns, or shall I wait till to-morrow morning? Nay, to-night. It shall be to-night. I will go and lie in wait to catch her in her hasty and guilty return—in her fright, her tremor. Then I will accuse her, overwhelm her with mortification, and then—why then, perhaps, because I know, with all her flagrant coquetry, she is too cold and cunning not to be pure—why *then* I will *forgive* her, for by Beelzebub, bad as she is, I *cannot, will not* resign her! Yes, I will forgive her, and if she has a heart lurking anywhere in her cold bosom, she must melt at that. I mean—I will forgive her on certain conditions; namely, that she marries me forthwith—and then—and then—and then let me catch your eyes or heart wandering, my lady, that's all."

Full of these contending passions and purposes—(for he was talking in one breath of forgiveness and revenge)—he hastened out of the room, went down the passage, and paused before Sina's bed-room at the opposite extremity. He turned his back, folded his arms, and leaned against it. He might have been there perhaps twenty minutes, when a side door, about half way the length of the passage, and leading down a flight of back stairs, opened cautiously, closed slowly and softly, and a light, stealthy cat-like step, only to be heard in the dead silence, came pit-patting up the passage. It was pitch dark. The squire held out his arms. The light step fled on—the light form was caught in the arms—to the bosom of the stout squire. A slight start, but no scream, not even an exclamation; only a low, determined, husky,

"Who are you, spy?" from the bad but brave girl.

"Your humble servant, Miss Sina Hinton, and the poor master of the house."

"Squire Darling!"

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"At you commands, Miss Hinton."

"*Squire Darling!*"

"Your most humble and obedient, Miss Hinton."

"SQUIRE DARLING!"

"Will you have ocular proof, Miss Hinton?"

"Do I *dream*, sir?"

"Yes; very fallacious waking dreams."

"At my chamber door at *this* hour, sir; *you!*"

"Even so, Miss Hinton, at this hour of the night, half-past ten o'clock," replied the squire ironically.

"And what may be your business here, may I inquire, sir?" demanded Sina, haughtily.

"To welcome Miss Hinton home from her midnight ride."

"What mean you, sir?"

"That you are discovered, Miss Hinton. Come, Sina, accompany me to my room—to some place where I can take a look at you." And drawing her arm within his own, he forcibly led her down the whole length of the passage and into the library. Then closing the door, he locked it and put the key in his pocket. Then taking the lighted candle from the candlestick, he flashed it toward Sina, saying, insultingly:

"Come, let's see you."

Miss Hinton sprang sharply around and confronted, defying him.

"By Heaven, Sina, you ride out at midnight to catch beauty from the starlight. This moment you look as fierce, sleek and beautiful as a young tigress." He flashed the candle over her and gazed at her with admiration, as well he might. Hers *was* the beauty of the tiger; the beauty of the serpent; the beauty of fire—bright, ardent, fierce.

There she stood, her slight and elegant figure, clad in the tightly-fitting, crimson satin, her small and graceful head adorned by a little black velvet riding-cap, from which long

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black plumes tipped with crimson, mingled flame-like with the splendid fall of glossy black ringlets thrown out into glittering relief by the crimson bodice. There she stood; one hand resting upon the back of a chair, the other carelessly twining among her rich ringlets, her thin cheeks burning with excitement, her splendid eyes flashing with defiance—her whole darkling, elfin face, keen, bright, fierce and threatening as a drawn stiletto. And there for an instant *he* stood, looking at her intently, until he began to tremble—then he returned the candle to the candlestick on the mantelpiece, and went and drank a deep draught of ice water to cool his fever and settle his nerves. Miss Hinton observed the action and smiled with scornful triumph.

"Well, I told you, Sina, that you are discovered."

"To—be—what?" demanded Miss Hinton, deliberately.

"How cool you are to be sure."

"Yes, though I have not quaffed a quart of ice-water."

"Do you understand that *you are found out?*"

"To be what? as I asked before."

"You have been watched—traced to 'The Soldier's Rest'—seen to enter the bachelor apartments of Colonel Dangerfield's house. Come, explain that, madam, if you please."

"Certainly; though I might assuredly question your right of inquiry."

"Well! Come, the explanation. Let's hear your fine trumped-up story. I warrant you have one that would bamboozle a Yankee lawyer. Come, I wait."

"Keep cool—don't be in a hurry."

"Ho—ho—ho! the duplicity of the woman; you want a minute to invent a story. Come, no delay, now."

"Oh, no hurry. Life is long; a young man like you, has quite a future before him."

"Good! you try to inflame my anger. I—I *will* keep my temper."

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"Will you take a glass of ice-water to help you do it?"

"Go to the deuce, ma'am, or explain your pretty piece of folly, if you expect to continue under my own and my sister's protection."

"Good! My pretty piece of folly? Let's see—which pretty piece was it? I have forgotten—I have so many; one of the pretty pieces of folly, is the act of standing here listening to you."

"You have no choice, my caged jay. You were—seen."

"Yes, sir."

"To—leave—this—house—"

"Yes, sir."

"At—nine—o'clock—at—night."

"Yes, sir."

"You were *traced*—"

"Yes, sir."

"*To Soldier's Rest.*"

"Yes, sir."

"Aye, mock me! You were seen to *enter*—"

"*Yes, sir.*"

"Colonel Dangerfield's *bachelor apartments.*"

"YES, SIR."

"Explain that."

"Yes, sir—I entered Colonel Dangerfield's bachelor apartments because—"

"Well, because—"

"Because his matrimonial apartments are not yet open."

"The blood rushed to Squire Darling's head—his throat swelled—his face turned black—the veins started like cords—he trembled all over—he staggered, sank into a chair; the perspiration started, streamed from his face—this saved Squire Darling from a stroke of apoplexy, I do believe. He tremblingly drew a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his eyes again and again, heaved a profound sigh, drew a deep breath, and recovered himself.

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Sina was burning, blazing, sparkling, scintillating—mirth, scorn and defiance, in every glow of her crimson-draped figure, and every flash of her fierce and elfin features.

"Au—audacious, un—unblushing girl," gasped the nearly suffocated squire.

"Why should I blush?"

"She—she glories in her shame."

"In my innocence, and the perfect safety of my position, sir."

"The perfect safety of your position, you shameless—oh, my Lord, I do not wish to forget that she is a woman."

"Ah, ha, now we are going to have rehearsed another comedy of jealousy."

"Jealousy! not so, my dear girl. Do not flatter yourself that I shall amuse you with any such food for satire, this evening—useless as absurd. No, Sina; but you need to be looked after and taken care of."

"Possibly you would recommend a strait-jacket, sir."

"Possibly I might, Miss Hinton—at all events you need to be controlled; and I must have a better right than now I have, to control you. And now, this night, Sina, and before you leave this room, we must come to a downright understanding."

Her tone changed. She left off her flippant, half-scornful manner of replying, and seating herself composedly, she said:

"Yes—it is as well that, before I leave the room, we do come to a distinct and final understanding; pray, proceed, sir."

"Then, Miss Hinton, are you ready to give me your hand to-morrow?"

"No, sir."

"When then?"

"*Never*, sir."

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"Never!"

"Most assuredly, *never!*"

"Ha! we'll see! Pray why?"

"Because, sir, I have promised the said sallow little digit to Colonel Dangerfield."

"The d—l! No, that can't be. I swear it is a falsehood. I beg your pardon—I mean a mistake."

"Colonel Dangerfield will call on you to-morrow, sir, in your capacity of my sort-of-guardian."

"It's not so! What! Dangerfield! *he! so haughty!*"

"Exactly, sir! so haughty, that he defies the commentaries of his neighbors, and dares to please *himself* in the choice of a wife, even when that choice rests on a penniless girl like me!"

"Here's a deill of a fuss! Oh! it's all an imposition! It can't be so! What's more, it *shan't* be so! By Heaven shan't it! What! Dangerfield! he is betrothed to Imogene!"

"She has discarded him, sir, or set him free, which amounts to the same thing!"

"The d—l! I *knew* you were trying to entrap him. I knew you were flirting desperately with him—but I knew that you were too selfish, cold and fierce, to come to any harm; and I never dreamed that he would wish to *marry* you?"

"Thank you, sir!"

"Sina, he shall not have you! By the blood of Beelzebub, he shall not have you to save *his*, to save your own life!"

Miss Hinton smiled contemptuously.

"And what is more, I will have you myself! I've used persuasion, entreaty, long enough; now I'll try something else—for, though all the power of Heaven, and the ingenuity of earth, and the malignity of hell were leagued to prevent it, I *will* have you!"

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Miss Hinton laughed scornfully.

"Why don't you answer me, girl?"

"Because you rave—and it is folly to reply to raving. How on earth, I should be glad to know, are you to prevent my marrying whom I please?"

"*How?* I'll go to him, and say that I have been this girl's lover for two years—during the whole of which time she has lived with me!"

Miss Hinton raised her splendid eyes, blazing with defiance, to his.

"And if you *do*, sir, you will but endorse what I have told him myself. You will but give him a new motive for hastening our marriage, that I may be the more speedily released from this persecution!"

"By Heaven, then, he shall not have you! What! *you* that I have had in my sight for two years—*you* that I have been habituated to believe my own—*you* that I have adored, when I have looked forward even to long future years—"

"Of gout and plethora, and being nursed—an enchanting prospect for me, sir. I always looked upon you as a father, *Squire* Darling; and as a daughter, I would even nurse you in your old age and infirmities!"

"Confound daughters! Old age! infirmity! indeed—*that* is insulting! By Heaven, Miss Hinton, you need not think of marrying that cursed whiskered fellow! He shall not have you to save *his* life or *your* own. If the worst comes to the worst, I will go to him, and will *say that which you may very readily guess, Miss Hinton, and which will prevent his marrying you!*"

Now Sina turned deadly pale with fear and rage. Her very lips were white, and trembling as she said:

"*You!* a Virginia gentleman! a Darling! *No!* you will *never* do that!"

"Will I not? Miss Hinton, I am the only one you can,

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in any sort of honor, marry. I love you—wish to marry you—will settle a fortune on you—will place you at once at the head of society in this neighborhood; but, Sina, if you persist in this fancy for my rival—so help me Heaven, I will go to Colonel Dangerfield, and *whisper that in his ear which shall lead him to break with you!*"

"You will not! No, you will not do that," frantically exclaimed Sina.

"Look in my face and see if I will not!"

"Do IT, SIR, THEN!" at last, in fury, broke out Sina. "Do it! but do not hope that that perfidy will serve you! For, look you, I *am* a fiend incarnate! My mother's matchless wrongs, my own, have made me so! The only human feeling I have, is an affection for Dangerfield—an affection that *shall not* be wounded! *shall not*, under any contingency, while he *only* loves me! For, oh! *listen* man, that standeth there talking of some weak counterfeit that thou call'st love, and mixing it up with carriages and horses, and houses, and marriage settlements—*Listen! I love* Dangerfield—he loves *me!* and neither your *perfidy*, his *pride*, nor my own soul's salvation, shall separate us! No! no! no! I will follow him, live with him, live *for* him! I had rather be Dangerfield's *servant*, his *dog*, than *your* wife, with all the emoluments of that honorable office; and feeling as *I* do, there were less *shame* in it!" Her face worked, nay convulsed with the warring passions of anguish, despair, and rage. Strange, but the storm, the tornado raging in her bosom attracted him powerfully. He had been very pale—now his face flushed deeply; he stretched out his hand, caught her—strained her, struggling to his bosom—cleared her ringlets from her agonized face, and half suffocated her with kisses, exclaiming between them:

"And I will tell him that *thus* I have had her in my arms—*thus* I have strained her to my bosom!"

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"*Hold!*" said Sina, in a low, deep, stern, concentrated tone of rage. "*You hug your death. Be warned! Release me, or I will* KILL YOU!"

"I lose my time," sneered he, resuming his caresses—and saying between them: "Ah! little kittens snarl and spit, but seldom bite like nobler animals!"

"*I will kill you!*"

"Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! so you threatened once before! I am not scared! Oh! I'll tell him! Oh! I'll tell him! that—*thus!* and *thus!* and *thus!* I have suffocated her with kisses a hundred times!"

"And that THUS she finally punished with DEATH a violence she could not prevent!" said Sina, swiftly snatching a short dagger from her bosom, and driving it to the hilt in his chest.

Suddenly, with a sharp cry, he bounded up, dropped her, pulled the blade from his bosom, and cast it down, exclaiming: "Serpent! so you really *have* fangs then!" A dark stream of blood trickled from the wound; he tried to stanch it with his handkerchief. She had started to her feet, and stood pale and rigid. They looked at each other.

On the carpet between them, glittering and flashing in the fire-light, lay the tiny jeweled poniard, the blade wet with blood.

"Aye, sir, look at me! *I* have no fear of blood! no dislike to shed it! I do not mind taking life! do not fear to lose my own! Send now and denounce me!"

"Unhappy girl! I have no intention to denounce you!"

"Say that a youthful girl—an orphan child—was cast, helpless, upon your protection. Say that she confided in your honor; say that you persecuted her with an odious suit, which, when she rejected, you punished her with loathsome caresses, which she had no strength to prevent! Say that when she would have avenged herself, her heart was

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brave, her eye steady, her hand firm, and her steel sharp, and she drew *some* bad blood! Though, thanks to six inches of fat, you are not mortally wounded after all!" She finished with a wild and bitter laugh, and was turning to leave the room, when he faintly recalled her, saying feebly:

"Sina, Sina! I forgive you; but—but—for Heaven's sake, a surgeon—I die," and fainted.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ARREST.

Loa: He! He never did it, sir: I swear to Heaven he never did it!
Officer: *Some one did!* And when one man's murdered, it stands to reason another must be hanged.—*Haimonde.*

"But this is horrible! Good Heaven! My brother assassinated! His most faithful servant Achilles arrested for the murder. In the name of Heaven, woman, stop your raving, and give me a more intelligible account of what has happened! Harriette Joy, my dear, go and order the horses to be put to the carriage immediately. Lock Mrs. Ardenne's door on the outside, and take away the key, so that no indiscreet servant may overwhelm her or my mother with this news. Go at once, my dear; and now, Minerva, tell me, how *did* this occur?" inquired Mrs. Summerfield, as, pale with horror, she heard the news of her brother's state from old Nerve, early on the morning succeeding the scene at Oak Grove, described in the last chapter.

"Oh! Miss Mar'get! Oh! chile! Oh! my blessed heavenly Marster!" sobbed the poor old woman, wringing

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her hands and writhing her body, as though in acute bodily pain, and about to roll on the carpet.

"Imogene, my love, go and get her a glass of brandy."

"Oh, no! no! no!—no brandy! no brandy!—it wur all along o' that 'fernal truck that my poor, dear ole man, the 'fernal fool! let Sam get 'head o' him so far as to lif' his han' gin his own-begotten marster! 'deed it wur, honey; 'deed it wur, chile! Take the darned etarnal devil's blood out'n my sight! Oh! my blessed, patient, heavenly, loving, long-sufferin' 'vine Marster! have marsy on top 'o a poor ole sinnin' nigger, 'oman, as has 'live t'rough all the sorrows 'o this sorrowful worl' to the age of sixty-five years old—for to see her dear, dear darlin' ole 'panion have his senses away, an' turn a darned etarnal fool in his ole days, an' lif' his han' ag'in his own lawful marster! Oh, Lord! Oh, massy! does hanging hurt much?—'cause I gwine be hung in his place!—'deed I am, Miss Mar'get!—'fore my blessed, heavenly 'Deemer I am, honey!—'cause I'm his own lawful wife, and we two been together fifty years come nex' Christmas Eve at night, sence we firs' took up 'long o' one another!—'deed it is, chile! an' I've got a lawful right to wide (divide) all his troubles! 'fore my lovin' Lod I have, chile! an' so long as Sam did get 'head o' him poor, dear ole heart—the darned, etarnal ole fool!—I means to be hung!—'deed I do, honey; 'cause you see, honey, it's perdination 'nough to go an' lif' his ondutiful ole han' 'gin his own lawfully begotten marster, 'out ony thing else. Oh, Miss Mar'get honey, try to 'suade the poor, forsok ole sinner to 'fess, an' save his poor mortal soul. Sam does 'ceive the poor ole soul so, an' makes him so 'blin' to his own poor dear soul's mortal good, as to make him 'ny all about it! Oh! Miss Mar'get, honey, it's downright awful to one as loves him like I does, to stan' by an' hear that poor ole mad crectur set an' swear till his throat swells up fit to choke him, as he never *did* do it,

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an' never *would* do it, even in 'fence o' his own life! 'more 'an even he'd go an' 'bel against his Lod!—when we all know how he *did* do it!"

"Good Heaven! Can we get nothing more satisfactory from you than this? Imogene, love, give her some ether; she is hysterical."

And so she was, poor old soul, sobbing, gasping, wringing her hands, and swaying her body to and fro. Miss Summerfield, full of pity, brought her some ether in a glass, and forced her to swallow it. This settled her nerves and composed her mind, so that she drew a long breath, and remained silent. Mrs. and Miss Summerfield gravely awaited her word—so gravely, that the poor woman, looking at them, said—

"You ain't mad 'long o' me, are *you*, Miss Mar'get?—are *you*, Miss 'Genie?—'cause yon see, child'en, I nussed you both, mother an' chile. Miss Mar'get wur the first chile as ever I nussed, forty years ago come this nex' August; an' I nussed you, Miss 'Genie, nineteen years ago come this nex' May; an' I nussed Miss Winny seventeen years ago come this nex'—nex' *April*,—'deed I did, child'un!—'deed I didn't know the difi'ence, an' ef you on'y leave me take Miss Winny's little wee puny baby home 'long o' me to the Quarters, an' put a little piece o' clear fat bacon in its little fis' to suck, you soon see diff'unce. It git fat, and grow like sin, 'deed it would, Miss Mar'get. 'Fore my blessed Judge it would, Miss 'Genie."

"Imogene, my child, go and hurry them with the carriage, and send some one with my bonnet and shawl. I must hasten to Oak Grove, for it is clear that we shall get nothing out of her."

"You ain't mad 'long o' me, child'un, are you—'cause ef Sam got 'head o' poor ole man Kill—(there, I might o' known that onfort'nate name wan't going to turn out to no good!)—it wan't my fault, but my sorrow enough. You ain't mad 'long o' me, child'un, are you?"

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This was said in a low, slow tone, of such piteous deprecation, that Mrs. Summerfield answered gently:

"Oh no—we are not angry with you—how should we be? We feel very sorry for you—only we would like you to tell us, as we go along, what really has happened."

"The carriage is ready, madam," said a servant, entering at the same moment that Mrs. Summerfield's maid appeared with her cloak and bonnet.

"Come, Minerva! you must return in the carriage with me."

"Oh, no ma'am, Miss Mar'get, 'deed you mus' 'xcuse me. I gwine down the jail-house, to 'suade ole man Kill to 'fess, an' then to bail him out."

"Bail him out!"

"Yes, honey,—yes, chile,—yes, Miss Mar'get. I know how I ain't got no money, but I thank my heavenly Jesus, I got what's o' more valuation to me than goole—I got my poor ole black body, an' I'll go bail long o' that. I go tell 'em for to let poor ole man Kill go an' put me in his place —'cause you know, Miss Mar'get, its bad 'nough to have the sorrow o' sin on his poor ole sick min', out bein' 'fined in jail, 'sides which, you see, Miss Mar'get, he's not been usen to bein' 'fined to one spot. He's been usen to bein' on ole Chally's back, from airly in the mornin' till late at night, ridin' from fiel' to fiel' lookin' arter the niggers— don't look so sorry, Miss 'Genie, honey—'twon't go so hard 'long o' me to take his place in jail, 'cause, you see, I've been usen to a sitting-tary life, which 'ould go hard long o' him, as has allus been a horseback from 'fore the risin' o' the sun, to the goin' down o' the same,' as the Ten Commandments says."

Mrs. Summerfield explained—while she arrayed herself in her bonnet and shawl—that it was impossible for Nerve to bail her husband out of jail in the way proposed. Poor old Nerve opened wide her eyes at this, and replied with more indignation than we have ever seen her display:

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"Not!—not let me pawn myself for my ole man. Well! I mus' say, as I never murmurs at ány thing my blessed Lord in Heaven, or my pastors an' marsters on the yeth thinks proper for to do—but I *mus'* say!—that that's *very* hard, and *very* 'rannical, *very!*—when they let a rich person bail their frien' out'n jail with *money*—they won't let a poor person bail *theirn* out with all they got—their poor ole body!" and dropping down at the front door, which they had all now reached, the old woman rolled on the marble pavement, giving herself up to sobbing and groaning.

Mrs. Summerfield stooped down and said, gently—

"Nerve, do not cry. I will bail Achilles out—if it be possible. Don't cry. Get up, and come with me."

Her kind words, and a glass or two of water, helped the poor old creature upon her feet, and she entered the carriage with Mrs. Summerfield.

"Take care of your cousin, Imogene. If necessary, I will send the carriage back for both of you, and in that case, you will know how to bring her without alarming her."

It was not until they had ridden some way, that Mrs. Summerfield could draw from Nerve any thing like a connected statement of what had befallen. At last, however, she said—

"Why, you see, Miss Mar'get, honey, las' night, 'bout nine o'clock, poor ole man Kill, the cussed infunnelly ole fool! 'stead o' 'tirin' to his hones' bed like a christian ole nigger as has sot out to sarve his Jesus *ought* to do, he gits up from 'long side o' the fire where I was a-toas'in' o' my poor ole feet—goes to the cupboard and takes a big pull at the whiskey jug—'deed he did, honey!—and he draws on his great coat. 'Kill! where you goin' this time o' night?' I say,—'deed I did, chile. I ax him where he gwine, and he, 'stead o' satisfyin' o' his lawful 'panion, buttons up his coat, up to his chin, an' lookin' mighty stiff an' pompous, says, 'he wur goin' out on secret confotential business.'

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'Fore my blessed Lord he did, honey!—the firs' time as ever my ole man give me *shortness!* So I was hurted to the heart, an' I knew how it wur some o' Sam's doin's, else he'd o' told me, his lawful wife. So I tried to 'suade him, an' he said—'wimmin oughten to know every thing,'—'deed he did, Miss Mar'get. Sam had got the poor profane ole forsok sinner so in his power as to make him say to his own lawful wife—'wimmin oughten to know every thing!'"

"Go on."

"Well, you see, Miss Mar'get, he goed off, 'out another word, an' I goes to bed, but I didn't sleep, though I wur fur 'nough from guessin' how bad it *wur* a-goin' fur to turn out. So I laid, an' I tossed, an' I tumbled, an' I heard the clock strike ten—'leven—twelve! then sure as I'm a livin' sinner, Miss Mar'get, at that lonesome, wicked hour o' midnight, all of a suddint, I hears ole marster's bell ring—'Ting-a-ling—a-ling—a-ling—a-ling-ting-ting!—tang a-lang—a-lang—a-lang—*a-lang*—TANG—TANG!!—as if the whole blue chiny ruff of the sky had fell down—smash!—an' then it stopped, all on a suddint! an' then I jumped out o' bed, an' hawled on my clothes, an' runned to the house, fas' as ever my poor ole legs could tote me! an' when I got there, I foun' the kousekeeper runnin', an' the house-servants all runnin', an' we runned all toward ole marster's door, an' tried to open it, an' it wur locked, an' we listened, an' all wur still as death in there, an' then we rapped, an' the awfullest groans answered o' us, an' short, quick screams, an' then we bu'sted of the door open, an' as we did, somethin' rushed out past of us, an' we couldn't see what it was in the dark, an' bless the Lord, when we went in it was pitch dark a'mos', 'cept the murky fire-light, an' by *it* we saw ole marster, a-layin' with the side o' his head across 'o the andiron, which wur knocked over an' down underneath of him, jes as if he had fell an' struck it! an' we see the candlestick onto the floor, an' the candle out, jes as if some

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on' had hev it down o' purpose—an' we see a little, bright, shinin' little p'inard, a-shinin' an a-flashin' on the rug, jes like a little live wiper snake. Well, we lighted of the candle, an' we lifted ole marster up, an' underneath of him wur a little puddle o' blood !"

"Good Heaven !"

"True as I'm tellin' of you, Miss Mar'get, honey ! 'sides which there was a 'tusion on the lef' side o' his head where he mus' o' struck the an' iron as he fell !"

"Good Heaven !" again exclaimed the pale and horrified lady.

"Yes, honey ! yes, an' now comes the wus o' it—while some of us wur a tryin' to bring-to ole marster—the housekeeper an' some o' the men servants went a searchin' o' the room, an' oh ! my 'vine Marster ! oh ! my heavenly 'Deemer ! oh, my massiful Father ! as ever I should live to see it ! as ever I should live to tell it ! oh ! oh ! oh ! oh !" sobbed and groaned the old woman, rocking herself to and fro and wringing her hands.

Mrs. Summerfield controled her intense anxiety, and waited with apparent patience till the old woman should proceed, which she soon did in the following strain of bitter lamentation.

"Oh ! my lovin' Lord ! as I should 'a live to see an' to tell it !—there they foun' that poor ole misfortunate chile, ole Kill, a-hidin' a-hind a windy curtain an' froze stiff and striked dumb 'long o' scare ! an' they pulled him out right afore my face, an' his eyes wur a-startin' an' his teeth wur a chatterin' an his knees' wur a-knockin' agin each other, an' the poor ole fool couldn't give a single bit o' 'count o' himself—'deed he couldn't ; an' the housekeeper, she sent off two men one arter a sturgeon, an' tother arter Colonel Dangerfiel', he bein' the nighest neighbor' sides bein' a magister. All this time, two or three o' us had laid ole marster down on the sofy, an' wur tryin' to bring him to life

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One o' the men wanted to bleed him with a pen-knife—but I told him how I thought he'd los' blood 'nough 'ready, an' another wanted to pour whiskey down his t'roat, but I telled him ef he didn't take the cussed infunnelly stuff out'n my sight, how I'd heave it out'n the windy, an' so I wouldn' let them try no speriments till the sturgeon come."

"But Miss Hinton? Where was Miss Hinton, all this time?"

"Yes, bless the Lord! Well may you ask, Miss Marg'et. Soon as ever the housekeeper had 'spatched the two men—an' had my poor ole sinful, sufferin angel tied han' an' foot an' lain on the floor—oh Lord! oh dear! oh Lord! oh dear! Better I had never lived to see such a sight!" cried the poor old soul again, losing all self-control in her anguish.

"But Miss Hinton?"

"Yes honey; yes chile. Yes, Miss Marg'et, I gwine tell you, oh Lord! Well, soon as she had time fur to look about her, the housekeeper sent one o' the galls for to wake up Miss Sina, an' presen'ly the gal ran screechin' back into the room, white as a ghos' an' shakin' like an ager, an' putten another scare on wedem, for we thought Miss Sina mus' be wilterin' in her blood too, but 'mos' 'fore we could think that,—as the niggar gal comed runin' in screechin' an' screamin'—in rushed Miss Sina herself like a 'stroyin' flame o' fire—her eyes sparklin', her arms flyin' over her head, her hair streamin' behind—an' scarce no clothes on her back—ravin' 'stracted MAD! an' shriekin', 'I killed him! He deserved it! I'd do it again.'"

"Merciful Heaven!"

"True as I'm tellin' of you Miss Marg'et—it wur another one then we had to throw down by main force and bind—all the time she wur screamin' an' strugglin'—her eyes flamin' like fire—her hair twistin' an' writhin' like wipers, an' her mouth covered with white foam. All the time she wur

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shriekin', 'I did it, I did it!' It wur clear to see the poor gal wur driv ravin' 'stracted mad 'long o' the scare! But what wur awful to hear, wur that as soon as that poor forsok ole Kill, heerd the poor mad gal 'cuse herself, the cussed infunnelly ole d—l snatched at the chance, an' though he had not spoke a word in his own' fence afore now, lif' up his voice an' say 'Yes, that wur the *truffe* 'cause *he* saw her do it!' Oh, my blessed heavenly Marster, when a darned etarnal fool *do* sell his soul to the devil there ain't no ind to his devilments!"

"You seem to be so sure that your husband did this. *I* think that some weight should be attached to Miss Hinton's self-accusation."

"Lor' chile, I wish it *had* been she 'fore it had ever been poor old man Kill! But, honey, there wasn't no chance o' its bein' anybody else but *he*, 'cause you see, honey, wasn't the door busted open, wasn't it fastened on the inside, an' wasn't ole Kill foun' hidin' in the room, so scare, he didn't know what to say?"

"True, most true!"

"And didn't the housekeeper say as she wur waked up in the night by hearing o' ole marster an' Kill in loud altercation? Ah! Lord, Miss Mar'get, I don't love that young gal a bit! I don't beleeve no good of her. But she didn't do that there; I wish to the Lord she *had!*"

"Did the doctor get there?"

"The sturgeon? Yes, honey, an' Colonel Dangerfiel' too. An' Colonel Dangerfiel' had ole Kill locked up till this mornin', and the sturgeon had ole marster took off to his room, an' Miss Sina took off to hern, and he hisself wided the night 'tween them two; bein' fuss 'long o' ole marster, an' nex' 'long o' the poor gal. Oh, Lord, how I do wish it had been *she* sure 'nough!"

"What opinion did the doctor give of his patients?"

"Yes, honey. He said how ole marster's wuss a case of

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confusion of the horse-pit as had stunned him, an' how Miss Sina's wur a Sarah Bell (cerebral) information as had drive her crazy."

"That was last night. How are they this morning?"

"'Cisely the same, chile, please my blessed heavenly Marster, they are, Miss Mar'get. Ole marster layin' like he was dead, an' Miss Sina ravin' like she was 'stracted, 'deed they are. Ole marster stupid so nobody can't rouse him—Miss Sina ravin' so nobody can't hold her—ole Kill layin' in jail, where Colonel Dangerfiel' 'mitted him airly this mornin' to wait till he got over his scare 'fore he 'xamined him agin."

I said that the bridle-path between Red-Stone Hall and Oak Grove was very beautiful, upon the margin of the river, through the deep forests, over the tops of rocks, etc. The carriage road was a different affair—up and down steep hills all the way; now the coach would be laboring slowly and heavily *up* the steep hill, and now rushing, tumbling, and thundering down with a tumultuous rapidity, that threatened every instant to pitch the back of the carriage over the heads of the horses. Old Nerve held on to the side loops desperately with both hands, and at last called out to the driver—"I say, Bob, drive careful, honey, 'ca'se you got an onlucky passenger 'board, 'deed you has! Drive careful, chile, 'ca'se you see ef you goes an' breaks my neck, I can't be hang in place o' poor ole man Kill, 'deed I can't! (I wonder if hangin' *does* hurt bad!) Drive careful, honey, down this drea'ful—Lord have massy upon top of us—HILL!"

The last word jumped out with a heavy rebounding jolt, that, however, brought them safely to the bottom of the hill, and in full sight of Oak Grove Hall. In ten more minutes, Mrs. Summerfield had arrived, alighted, and followed by Nerve, had entered the house.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TRIAL.

Let the prisoner be placed at the bar.
Legal Form of Invitation.

I'll see, before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof there is no more but this—
Away at once with love and jealousy.—*Shakespeare.*

THERE was quite a crowd of people assembled at Oak Grove. There is nothing, neither wedding, christening, nor funeral, for bringing people together like a catastrophe, particularly if there is a mystery in it. On seeing the state of Squire Darling, Mrs. Summerfield had thought proper to send first for Miss Summerfield, old Mrs. Darling, and Mrs. Ardenne, from Red-Stone Hall. These three ladies had arrived, accompanied by Harriette Joy, who was always ready to offer her assistance in every species of distress. Next she had sent for Colonel Dangerfield, in his capacity of magistrate, and lastly, for Father Burleigh, to be on the spot "in case," to quote the vague language used to prefigure an expected dissolution, "in case any thing should *happen*."

Squire Darling's wounds had been dressed, and he lay upon his bed flat on his back, perfectly motionless, his eyes half open, but "lacking speculation," his lips blue and glutinous, his skin of that gray paleness which is usually the gathering shades of death. Winny, weak and pale, sat by her father's bed, her "numbed" affections slowly reviving at the piteous sight.

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Sina Hinton, in the opposite wing of the building, lay tossing and tumbling, or violently struggling, and filling the air with her maniac screams. Hettie Smilie and her father, who had come over at the first news of the calamity, had as much as they could do to hold her down during one of her paroxysms of frenzy. She was possessed with the idea that she had murdered Squire Darling, and was about to be led to the the scaffold for the crime; all her desperate shrieks and violent struggles were to escape the visionary executioner. There could be no greater trial to the good little landlord and his tender-hearted daughter, than to witness this agony of frenzy. Poor little Sammie Smilie she always took for the executioner, and would shriek horribly when he would approach to hold her, to prevent her throwing herself upon the floor, or dashing her head against the wall. This hurt his feelings more than any thing.

"*Me* a hangman! The Lord save her soul! *Me*—as allus goes out of sight and hearing whenever they kill a chicken for dinner! Do I look like a Jack Ketch, I asks any candid soul?" the little fellow would say, sitting down, puffing and blowing and panting, and wiping his innocent round face with his speckled yellow handkerchief. "Hettie, *do* I look cruel, honey?"

"No, indeed, father. You look just like what you are, the very best man in the whole world, I don't care who the others may be, even if they are priests or presidents. Don't mind what she says, father; she is raving mad."

These conversations would occur after Sina, with her violent struggles and shrieks, had quite worn out her strength, and lay in a state of temporary quietude from exhaustion. And it was singular that no one noticed her raving or attached any suspicion to her from the fact of her self-accusation. What motive in fact could Miss Hinton be supposed to have for deadly enmity to Squire Dar-

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ling? On the contrary, every one supposed them to be on terms of the most perfect confidence and cordiality. There was one, indeed, who grew pale and stern suddenly, when he would hear of Miss Hinton's "maniac fancies"—Colonel Dangerfield. He had, it is true, upon the strength of the strong, and but for *one* fact known only to Colonel Dangerfield himself, *overwhelming* circumstantial evidence, incarcerated poor old Kill, but he dared not trust his own greatly biased judgment with the onus of committing him for trial; he preferred being assisted by the cool heads and unburdened hearts of two of his brother magistrates. Old Kill had been confined—not in jail, yet, as poor Nerve and his fellow-servants, for his better security, had been led to suppose—but in a distant chamber in the house, there to await the arrival of the other magistrates.

They came about noon. One, a stern, severe-looking man, tall, lean, dark, bilious, exceedingly given to ferreting out incipient insurrections; his whole grave and stiff deportment expressing solemn "self-esteem." His name was Rock. And the other, a nice, pretty, smiling, skipping little gentleman, exquisitely well dressed; every expression, tone, and caper denoting dapper "approbativeness." The name of this pleasant little fellow was Lovejoy. The court was held, or rather the examination was conducted in the parlor. The three magistrates occupied seats at one end of the room, "I. Rock, Esq.," occupying the centre chair, and flanked on the right by the pretty little Mr. Lovejoy, and on the left by the stern and sad Colonel Dangerfield. A long table was before them, at one end of which sat a clerk, with pen, ink, and paper before him. The family and visiters then in the house were requested to be present at the examination. And indeed by this time the house swarmed with all sorts of people. The servants, with frightened looks and whispering tones, were collected in the passage ways.

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Presently poor old Kill was led, or rather dragged in, half dead with terror, and between two constables. He was the perfect ideal of abject guilt. His looks would have been evidence enough to any jury to bring in a verdict of GUILTY. Yes, his face *then* would have hanged him. He was followed by old Nerve, weeping bitterly, and goaded in by a man with a stick, walking behind her. Kill was placed before his judges, and then Nerve threw herself on his neck, weeping and hugging, and hugging and weeping, while between sobs and gasps she exhorted him as follows:—

"Oh, Killus, honey, 'fess, chile, 'fess! tell ole marster up there, (I. Rock, Esq., sitting bolt upright, very dark and threatening,) tell ole marster up there how Sam got the better of you, *do*, chile! Oh, Killus, 'fess an' save your poor, mortal soul! Oh, honey, fear not them as kin kill the poor, ole, 'firm, black body, but fear Him as can cast both body an' soul in hell. Oh, Killus, you an' me is *ole*, we is, an' we hasn't got long to stay on this yeth, we hasn't, not many days, we hasn't, an' if they goes an' takes away these few days, it ain't no 'count 'pared to 'ternity; don't less risk 'ternity long o' tellin' lies, *don't!*"

"I—I—I ain't got nothin' to 'fess *'bout*. I—I never didn't do it, Minny," chattered the teeth of poor old Kill.

"Order, in the court!" thundered dark Mr. Rock.

"Yes, marster, yes, I *will* order in the court, in one minute. Is it out in the yard? You go, Bob, an' order in the court, while I talks to my poor, ole, sinful, sufferin' angel! Bob 'll go, marster. I only wants for to 'suade my poor ole 'panion to 'fess an' save his poor, mortal soul. Killus, honey, Killus, listen to me, honey, don't look so scared. I dessay it ain't so bad, after all, an', an' it'll soon be over, the death, an' then think o' the long 'ternity, if you'll 'fess, an' heave the bad truck off your poor soul!"

"I—I ain't got *nothin'* to 'fess, I keep on telling of you," sobbed old Kill.

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"Oh, Killus! Killus, honey, you an' me is *ole*, we is; an' we'll soon be in 'ternity *anyhow;* an' does you think your poor ole Minny could joy herself 'long of Mary, an' Joseph, an' Jesus, an' Abraham, an', an' Isaac, an' Jacob, an' Ginrel Washin'ton, an' the other ladies and gent'men in Heaven, ef she seen how her poor, ole Killus was keepin' company long o' the devil, an' Judas, an' Ben'ict Arnolt? *No*, honey, *no*, you hear rap at the door—an' when Sam get up an' open it, you see your poor ole Minny stanin' there, come to stay 'long o' you, an' the devil, an' the traitors. Oh, Killus, save your poor, mortal soul, an' mine too—'fess, Killus, 'fess."

"If," wept the old man, with his head dropped upon his hands, "if any thing *could* make this here bitter hour, when they 'cuses me, 'fore Miss Mar'get an' all my chil'den, o' killin' o' my own marster, as I loved nex' bes' to God A'mighty—*any* bitterer—it would be to hear my ole 'oman think *so* wicked o' me."

It must not be supposed that the magistrates had set there in patient silence, while this scene was being rehearsed before them. Colonel Dangerfield indeed had been stern and silent, but "I. Rock, Esq.," had made several attempts to enforce order, and would have done so, only that gracious Mr. Lovejoy interfered and prevented him, using the ostensible argument that something might be elicited from the scene. Soon, however, they put an end to it; and while old Kill, half fainting, was held up between two constables, old Nerve was sworn to give in her testimony; and out of all rule and order, and with a streaming face, she turned to the prisoner and said:

"Kill, ef my testament hang you, chile, I can't help of it, honey, 'deed I can't, my poor, dear, ole darlin'. I 'bliged to 'fess the truffe; 'deed 'fore my heavenly Master an' Judge, I has, chile."

And in fact, Minerva's testimony bore very hard upon

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the prisoner, *to wit:* His taking the deep draught of whiskey —going out late at night—refusing to tell her where—her next seeing him—when at the alarm the door of Squire Darling's chamber was broken open, and the master was discovered prostrate and bleeding, and the man dragged half dead with terror from behind the window curtain. Through all sorts of cross-questioning, Nerve stuck to this story. At last she sat down, weeping, sobbing, and gasping hysterically. The housekeeper was next called, sworn, and deposed that between ten and eleven o'clock she had been awakened from her sleep by hearing Squire Darling in loud abuse of his man Kill; that she distinguished Kill's voice in reply many times, but could not make out what was said. She said there followed a silence, during which she slept; that at last she was again wakened by loud voices in the squire's room. She heard the squire's voice in a very high key, and then a sudden fall, a violent bell ringing, and sudden pause; then the door was burst open, the squire found wounded and senseless, and the old negro hid behind the curtain. Several of the house-servants were called, and all corroborated the testimony of the housekeeper in every particular. *Item*—Nerve "*thought*" some one rushed out as they all rushed in, but could not take it upon her conscience to swear to it. As none of the other witnesses knew any thing of the occurrence it went for nothing. SUMMARY: Old Kill was committed to the county jail to await his trial for assault, with intent to kill his master—a capital offense in the Southern States.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

> How little do they see what is, who frame
> Their hasty judgment upon that which *seems*.—*Southey.*

HAD Squire Darling died in his insensibility, it is certain that old Kill would have been hanged upon strong circumstantial evidence. No sooner, also, had the prison door clanged to upon the poor old soul, than he nearly gave himself up for lost, and began assiduously to prepare for death; if shuddering, shivering, compressing his throat with his fingers to realize how painful the strangulation might be, and gasping out frightened ejaculations to Heaven for mercy, could be called preparation. When the jailer, who was also turnkey, brought him supper, he fell down on his knees, and clasping his hands, with tears in his eyes, he besought him to let him out—*only* to let him out—he had a hundred dollars, he had been saving them all his life long, buried in a bee-gum—marster jailer should have it all if he would only let him out—OUT; oh! to get OUT! it was so horrible to be shut up there even all night—even if nothing worse came of it. The jailer was sorry for the poor old soul; tried to comfort him, but told him it was impossible to grant his request. Old Kill tossed and tumbled on his straw all night, groaning: "This here comes of eaves-dropping. Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! this here comes of eaves-dropping, it does!" Near morning he formed a resolution, and when the turnkey brought him his breakfast, he expressed it in these words—"Marster, I wants you, ef you please, sir,

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for to send for Colonel Dangerfiel', 'deed I does, sar. I gwine to 'fess, 'deed I is, sir. I ain't gwine to fly in the face o' my 'vine Marster any longer. I gwine to 'fess, 'deed I is, sir."

"No, uncle, I wouldn't do such a foolish thing as *that*, indeed. Nobody is bound to criminate themselves."

But Kill evidently thought that his only chance now lay in telling the truth. He reiterated his request that Colonel Dangerfield might be brought.

A messenger was dispatched to "The Soldier's Rest"; and soon returned, accompanied by the colonel. He entered the cell, and found the poor old prisoner sitting down on the straw, with a silk handkerchief thrown over his head, and his face bowed upon his hands. Colonel Dangerfield himself looked sombre, care-worn and exhausted. He leaned with his back to the wall of the poor cell that did not boast a single seat, folded his arms, and after gazing a moment at the bowed and collapsed form before him with a ray of selfish hope in his face, he said:

"Well, old man, you sent for me—what do you want?"

"To *'fess*, marster; *'deed* I does, sir."

Now the countenance of Colonel Dangerfield positively brightened.

"*To confess, what?* You actually did—"

"Yes, I *did*, marster. 'Fore my heavenly 'Deemer, I did."

"You poor miserable old creature. What tempted you to commit such a crime?"

"It wur all along o' eaves-droppin', 'deed it wur, marster. But I never thought how it would come to this here."

"The wages of sin is death."

"True, Lord."

"Old man, I wished to hear your confession for my own private satisfaction, and for the exculpation of an innocent person, who—but no matter."

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"Yes, sir; yes, marster, it wur for the expulsion o' a poor innocen' sinner as I *'fessed*, sir."

"I was about to say that you are not bound to criminate yourself."

"Yes, sir, I knows it; but you see, marster, 'less I crimerates myself, you'll keep on o' thinkin' as it wur me sticked the little pi'nard in ole marster's stomic."

"In the name of Heaven, old man, what do you mean?" exclaimed Colonel Dangerfield, growing again suddenly alarmed.

"I mean how it wur Miss Sina, marster; please the just Judge above, it wur, marster, for I seed her a-doin' of it; an' that there wur what I had to *'fess*, for it wur all along o' *eaves-droppin'*, marster, as I seen it, an' wur cotched *there*, an' *am here*."

"Tell me all about this," commanded Colonel Dangerfield, with frowning brow, set teeth, and closely riveted arms.

"Why, you see, marster—*ole* marster, he 'spected how you an' Miss Sina wur on wery frien'ly terms, so he sot me to watch Miss Sina—"

Colonel Dangerfield tied his eyebrows up into a hard knot.

"Beg your pardon, marster, but he 'manded me, sir, an' I wur bound to 'bey; so I follied her on to your house night afore las', an' when I seed her enter I goed back 'cordin' to orders, and telled ole marster; then, sir, he hev himself into a passion 'long o' me, and knocked me heels over head down-stairs—"

"And served you right, you old villain."

"'*Cisely so, sir.* Well, while I wur a rubbin' o' my bones, he calls me back, and swears me never to say a mortal word to any livin' soul bout it; an' then 'misses me agin. Well, marster, while I wur goin' slow like out, I hears ole marster leave his room, an' go an' lay wait for

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that young gal, who hadn't 'riv yet. Well, marster, now come the sin, an' the shame, an' the sufferin'. You see, marster, I allus had a laud'ble 'sire after inferation—so I goed into marster's room, an' hid ahind the windy-curtins, 'case I wanted so bad to hear what he gwine say to her. Well, bless the Lord, presen'ly he comes pullin' her in by the han'—"

Colonel Dangerfield grew black in the face.

"Then he 'gan scold her. Then she 'gan 'fen' herself. Then he shame her for gwine see gemman in his own house. Then she brag on gwine be married to you, sir—"

Colonel Dangerfield made a movement expressive of disgust and impatience.

"Then he sweared how she shouldn't have you, sir. Then she laughed scornful an' said how he couldn't 'vent it. Then he telled her how he'd tell *you* how she had been—I couldn't 'xactly hear *what*—but somethin' dreadful, for Miss Sina screamed right out, an' said, 'No, no, no! he would *never* do that.' An' he sweared by all as wur good an' great an' sacred, how he *would* do *an'* say jis *that*, an' how *then*, sir, you would never look at her, but spurn her away. Then Miss Sina got awful mad, an' high words riz, an' final, ole marster he cotch Miss Sina up in his arms, an' 'gan for to kiss her, as he said he had done a thousand times afore—an' presen'ly I heerd her speak deep an' threatenin' like thunder—an' then I peeped out, an' saw somethin' gleam an' disappear, an' a scream, an' a fall, an' then, blessed be my heavenly Lord—the room turned all roun' with me, an' I never knowed a singly thin' till I foun' the room full o' people, an' me tied han' an' foot, an' a layin' on the floor, an' Miss Sina strugglin' in the hands of four women, as wur tryin' for to hold her—ravin,' foamin,' her eyes wild, her arms flyin' over her head, her hair streamin', and screamin' how *she* did it herself; an' then I memorized where I was, an' all about it; an' I riz up, an' I telled 'em how yes it *wur*

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she, 'case I seed her do it; an' they wouldn't hear to it; an' telled me to hush a tryin' to put my crime on top o' the poor mad gal. Even my ole 'oman—" (here Kill ground his knuckles into his eyes) "yes, marster, even my ole 'oman 'lieved me for to be guilty. There, marster, that wur what I had to 'fess, *'deed* it wur, sir; an' it wur all the truth, please my just heavenly Judge, it wur, sir. Now, sir, if you'll only give me a chance to speak to my poor 'oman, an' take some o' the load offen top o' her poor 'stressed min', I be so much 'bliged to you, sir, *'deed* I would, marster. 'Fore the Lord, I would, sir."

It is impossible to describe the expression of Colonel Dangerfield's countenance and attitude during this recital. His face expressed the bitter sorrow of one who discovered the woman he loved to be worthless; the bitter self-loathing of one who found himself out to be grossly duped—shame, disgust, rage, determination—all suppressed, but intense. At last he spoke.

"Achilles!"

"Sir."

"Speak nothing of this to any one until I come to you again."

"Not to my ole 'oman, sir?"

"Yes. I will send her here; you may clear yourself with *her;* but in that case detain her here until I come."

"'*Cisely so,* sir."

And Colonel Dangerfield left the prison. Now, this story of Kill's corresponded so well with his well-known character of eaves-dropper, and agreed so well with other circumstances in connection, that Colonel Dangerfield could have no blessed doubt of its truth. Indeed, frequently before this, and during the absence of Sina, he had been struck with the most painful suspicion, which, in her presence and under the miraculous fascinations of her manner, had entirely disappeared, and for which he mentally and severely reproached

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himself, seeking to make amends to her for his silent doubts by throwing into his manner the gravest devotion.

Reader, have you never been tormented by such a state of affairs? Among all your acquaintances are there none whom you, in your cool and sober moments of solitude and reflection, *know* to be at heart selfish and calculating, yet whose fascinations of manner will compel you to abjure your instincts, and even fill you with remorse for ever having cherished an evil thought of them? Do you remember the anecdote told of Sheridan and one of his creditors, whom he had victimized a hundred times, and who, going to him full of fury to collect his debts or throw the debtor into prison, came away not only without fulfilling his purpose but actually a hundred pounds poorer than he went, Sheridan having magnetized an additional hundred pounds out of his pocket by way of a loan.

And then there was Samson and Delilah. One would think that after the syren had tricked him twice—had twice falsely and traitorously sought to deliver him bound into the hands of his enemies, failed and been discovered—that Samson would have been wise and not permitted the Circe to magnetize his vital secret from his bosom; but you read that he would not or could not resist her fascinations; and, in spite of his bitter experience of her first treachery, and her palpable inflexibility of purpose to betray him, he trusts her again and is finally ruined.

There is no doubt on earth that had Sina Hinton been once more on her feet, with that melodious voice and those alluring eyes once more under her sane control, she would have wiled her victim to believe just what she pleased; but self-cheated with her own duplicity, and self-stung to madness by her own fierce passions, the girl now raved in high delirium, or lay in fits of complete prostration and insensibility. There was a change passing over her illness now. Every fit of frenzy was less violent, and every relapse into insensi-

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bility was more complete; and in the latter state now her features began to wear the pinched expression, and her complexion the grayness of approaching dissolution.

True to his promise, Colonel Dangerfield sent old Minerva to the prison. This was the first opportunity the jealous surveillance of the officers had permitted the old couple to talk together. Now, as Nerve entered, she threw herself upon the neck of her old husband, and, "lifting up her voice," wept aloud, exhorting him between her sobs and gasps to "'fess."

"I has 'fessed," said the old man, and went on to explain to her the simple circumstances that had led to his being suspected.

Tears expressed all Nerve's emotions. If she were afflicted, she wept; if she were highly amused, she laughed till she wept; and now her tears came in floods to express the joy she felt as she clasped and kissed her old lifelong friend again and again, sobbing and laughing in her foolish fondness.

"My olé chile is innocen'! My dear ole chile is innocen'! He hasn' 'fended of his 'vine Marster—he hasn' lifted of his han' agin his yethly marster. Oh, it is sich a comfort for to know my dear ole chile is an innocen' lamb, is a poor, dear, innocen', sufferin' ole angel."

And so she sobbed and laughed until her dear old angel said:

"But, olé 'oman, honey, bein' innocen' as an unhatch chicken ain't a gwine to save me long as circumferences make so much 'gin me."

"Oh, Killus, honey, I ain't got a singly fear—'deed I isn't, honey. Only when I thought how you was guilty, then I was sad an' sufferin'; now I's joyful; I is not got a singly—nothin' ain't no 'portance, 'parison to your bein' innocen'."

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While they were yet speaking the turnkey entered and told Kill that he was free to leave the prison, for that an order had come for his being set at liberty.

"There, Killus, there! Didn't I tell you how your innocence would shine out as the light. Didn't I tell you so, my dear ole chile?"

They hurried joyously away, reached Oak Grove, where their fellow-servants received them with loud demonstrations of joy, at the outer farm gate; then, as they approached the house, they became silent and whispered to Kill and Nerve that death was in the house. Old Kill thought it was his master, and grew very ashy in the face. He entered the house with noiseless steps. His companions dispersed. He met Colonel Dangerfield, looking grave and sorrowful. He bowed to the colonel, and begged to know if he might see his old master. Colonel Dangerfield assented, and the old man passed slowly and reverentially up-stairs. He tapped at the door, which was opened by Harriette Joy, who silently admitted him. The room was in semi-darkness, but lying on the bed he recognized his master, pale and prostrate, but certainly not dying—he could see that, even in this subdued light. Father Burleigh sat by the head of the bed. The old man approached cautiously and stood silently by the bedside. It seems that he had been sent for, or expected, for his master feebly extended his hand to him, and faintly said:

"Poor—poor—poor—*poor devil,*" and dropped his hand and voice, exhausted. After a few minutes looking at him, he said, very faintly: "They—would have hanged you—for eaves-dropping. I told you how it would end." And after another interval, he motioned for a restorative, which Harriette put to his lips. When he had drunk this off, he motioned to Father Burleigh and Harriette to leave him alone with his servant. When they left the room he turned to Kill and said, in a stronger voice:

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"So, Kill, s'pose I had died in a stupor, you'd been executed on strong circumstantial evidence, all owing to your habit of eaves-dropping."

"Yes, marster, I knows it; I knows it, sar; '*deed* I does. I's cured, sir; 'deed I is."

"Glad to hear it; but I sent for you to say, that on pain of my severest displeasure you are not to mention to any soul the scene that you witnessed."

"No, sir; I won't sir; 'deed, sir, I won't."

"*Have* you spoken of it to any one?"

"No, sir; to no one, sir, 'cept it were Colonel Dangerfield, and to my old 'oman, sir."

"Dangerfield! Yes, it was as well that he knew of it; and Nerve—go now and enjoin Nerve to silence, for if I ever hear of this subject again, from any quarter, I shall know it came from *you* or *Nerve*, in which case—come, I do not like to threaten; but you know me."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, go."

The old man bowed himself from the room. As he glided along the darkened and silent passage, a low, deep, prolonged wail rose and swelled upon the ear.

"The Lord have mercy upon us!" ejaculated the old creature, trembling. "What *was* that?" A second time it arose upon the air, swelling in a volume of sound and sorrow, and died away in quivering anguish. Lord *save* us; what was that!" again cried the old man.

"Hush, Uncle Kill; it is Sina; she is dying," said Harriette Joy, as she emerged from a side-door, which, as it opened, gave a glimpse of a darkened chamber, a canopied bed, and emerging from the deep shadows of the picture—the shadows of surrounding curtains and dark-draped figures—gleamed a wild and maniac face, with streaming hair, and long, thin, pale arms thrown aloft, like streaks of light among black clouds. She closed the door instantly on this

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horrible picture. Harriette approached him, and, drawing him down the passage, said: "Uncle Kill, she is dying—dying horribly—unshriven—unanointed—going as no soul should go into the presence of its Creator. Father Burleigh can do nothing with her. Even if a gleam of reason returns, she laughs horribly in his face, and tells him that she will hear him when they both renew their acquaintance in ——. Oh, you know the place she said. It is horrible. Uncle Kill, you must saddle the fastest horse in the stable and go to Sacred Heart for Mr. Vellemonte. *He* can still the fiercest tempest I ever saw arise in a sinful human breast; perhaps he can bring quiet to this stormy soul."

"Yes, honey, yes; yes, chile. But, Miss Harry, for the pitiful Lord's sake, honey, tell me how it comed 'roun' as my innocence was made manifes' as the sun at noonday—jes tell me that, an' I'll ride like sheriff was a-hind of me; '*deed* I will, Miss."

"Why, Mr. Lovejoy remained in the house to watch the event of Squire Darling's wound; and he gave strict orders that, if he should return to consciousness, *he*—I mean Mr. Lovejoy—should be summoned immediately to take advantage of what might be a temporary return to reason only, to take down his deposition. Well, as soon as your master gave signs of returning consciousness we sent for him. An hour after, during his examination, your master testified, to every one's astonishment, your entire innocence of any participation in his assassination; and more, refused to discover the guilty party. Of that guilty party, however, alas!" added Harriette, "there can be now no doubt upon any mind; and I say this now, because I believe you to have been a witness to the whole scene, and to advise you, as you value the peace of your master's family, to be forever silent on the subject."

"I gwine to, Miss Harry; *deed* I is, chile."

"There, now, hurry, Uncle Kill, and get Mr. Vellemonte here."

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The old man hurried to the stables once again, saddled the best blood in the stalls, and hastened to Sacred Heart. He returned in two hours, attending Mr. Vellemonte. The young priest passed immediately into the chamber of the dying maniac. I suppose some would say it was mesmerism, some mere mannerism, while others, with a better faith, would define it to be the power of religion, that enabled the young priest to compose the raving girl, who, settling into her last repose, lost that agonized contraction of her features that had, since her illness, marked her countenance even in its moments of exhaustion.

One hour after this Sina Hinton died.

Her funeral took place the third day from that of her death. The event was broken gradually to Squire Darling; who, nevertheless, suffered a severe relapse. It was a fortnight before the convalescence of the squire permitted his relatives to return to their home—taking with them Winny, whose feebleness required the constant attentions of her aunt and cousin.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FATHER BURLEIGH'S CONFESSION.

Oh! thou dead
And everlasting witness! whose unsinking
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what thou art now
I know not! but if thou see'st what I am,
I think thou wilt forgive him whom his God,
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.—*Byron's Cain.*

THE deeply tragic events at Oak Grove had so shattered the nerves of the good old pastor of Sacred Heart, that he

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now lay prostrate on his humble bed at the cottage parsonage. Miss Mattie Smilie, Harriette Joy, and the young curate, Claude Vellemonte, vied in their attentions upon him. But the influence of the young curate was as heretofore the most healthful. His look and tone and touch were as usual life-inspiring.

"I don't know what makes me feel so," said Miss Mattie Smilie, as she busied herself setting out "bulbouses" in the garden; "but somehow or other, good and great as he is, it *does* feel to me as if Mr. Vellemonte oughten't for to be a priest!"

"Why?" asked Harry Joy. "I want you to tell me why, because I have often had that thought myself?"

"Why, it feels to me as if he were too full of life."

"Levity?"

"Levity?—what's that?"

"Why flippancy—lightness of conduct—a—a gayety—joyousness."

"N-no—not—that, but too full of LIFE—that's the word! I don't know any other." And so indeed felt every one, even while worshiping their gifted young curate.

I have spoken before of the half-suppressed joyousness of heart that was the very illumination of his highly vitalized beauty, and of that power springing from perfect healthfulness of body, mind, and spirit—rising above circumstances, and making glad every gloomy scene, bright every dark scene; magnetizing the sick with health; inspiring the sceptic with faith; raising the desponding by hope; softening the hardened, and redeeming the reprobate sinner by love! It was in the fullness of this power that Claude Vellemonte sat by the bed of Father Burleigh on the afternoon of the Sunday next preceding Easter. He had composed his patient into a refreshing sleep. He had slept many hours, and still Claude Vellemonte retained his seat by the bed watching him steadily. At any sign of restlessness

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Claude would quietly slip his arm under the aged head, raise it tenderly, change the pillow, let the weary head down easily again, draw out his arm, and smoothing back the thin gray locks from the sunken temples, recompose him to sleep. If again he stirred, a few passes of the cool hand over his brow and temples stilled him into deep repose—so his rest was protracted for many hours. At last Claude Vellemonte knowing that he had slept long enough suffered him to awake. The young man sponged his hands and face with cold water and cologne, and gave him a glass of barley-water flavored with lemon-juice. Then he changed his pillows and resumed his seat by his side with cheerfulness.

"Claude," began the old priest.

"My father!" answered the young man.

"My *son* in years—my *father* I had almost said in wisdom and in grace!—'*bless me, for I have sinned.*'"

"May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost bless thee, my father!"

"Son, I have somewhat to say to thee."

"Speak, father, I listen."

"Draw the curtain, shut out the light, close the door, for it is a long and dark story I have to tell thee, my son."

Claude Vellemonte did as requested, and resumed his seat at the bedside of the invalid. He took one of the old wasted hands within his own, and held it while the old priest gained strength to tell his story.

"Claude, did it never occur to you that I had a lifelong sorrow and remorse?"

"I have seen it, father, and hoped for the day when you would confide in me and share your burden with me—to-night, I thank God that you have strength to do so. I listen."

And he pressed the thin hand, and his young strong life seemed to send energy through all the feeble nerves of the invalid. The old priest commenced his story.

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THE SECRET CRIME.

Claude Vellemonte, I was early left an orphan with my twin sister. We were placed by the executor of our father's will in the same monastic school for education—she in the female department, I in the male. We were then fifteen years of age. I admired that sister of mine with an enthusiasm that no words can describe. I loved her with a strength and devotion to which no words can do justice. She was my sole thought in the present, my sole object in the future! She was my love, my religion, my idolatry! If I had an ambition for wealth, rank, power, or fame, it was that *she* might be crowned with glory. The strict rule of the seminary in which we were placed forbade our meeting. The boys and the girls, or it would now be termed the young gentlemen's and the young ladies' department, had not even a chapel in common, but each had its separate place of worship and its distinct pastor. Once a month, however, I was permitted to see my sister for half an hour in the ladies' parlor, in the presence of one of the sisterhood. These, restricted as our intercourse was, were the very brightest moments of my school days. Veronica was beautiful. Brothers do not generally see their sisters' beauty, but *I* felt Veronica's extreme loveliness in my heart of hearts. I could see in every succeeding visit I paid her, a new unfolding of beauty—some new fresh leaf of the sweet bud blooming forth. How I longed for the time to come when we should be of age—be emancipated from school-life, and when I should take her home and have her with me forever. Then as I watched her growing into such wonderful beauty, I would think that even then some man would see and love her, would win her deepest love and wile her from me, and a pang of jealousy would dart through my heart. I strove with this feeling—I partly conquered it. I grew to look upon Veronica's future marriage as a

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certainty, and accustomed myself to think of passing my life in her home as the bachelor brother and uncle—and of making *her* children *my* heirs. And yet I was very much discontented with this prospect, and sighed for the past days when we had been the whole world to each other. Yes! I dreaded now the long desired emancipation from school—I dreaded it as the greatest misfortune that threatened us.

Evils that we dread seldom happen to us.

Years passed slowly enough over our heads—and every successive year Veronica matured in beauty, and I loved her with a deeper devotion. But another change besides maturing of her loveliness, was coming on her. She grew—*not cold* to me—but—*indifferent to me*, I had almost said *unconscious* of me. Her beauty was getting a devotional character. Her expression became elevated, rapt, inspired. She was growing to resemble some pictures of the Virgin Mary. I sometimes thought her high style of countenance inadvertently *caught*, as it were, from the incessant contemplation of some beatified saint's or virgin's image. My soul felt darkened and chilled as though she had withdrawn her light and warmth from me, and was breathing it incense-like to Heaven. The time approached for our leaving school, which was the period also at which our guardian would surrender up to us our patrimony, and we should establish ourselves in the world. I was totally unprepared for what happened next. Upon the day we were to have left the seminary we assembled in the ladies' parlor in the presence of the Lady Superior, the Chaplain of the institution, our guardian, and an attorney. There we were to be put in possession of the title-deeds of our patrimony, before taking leave of our many years' abode. It was there that I received from the lips of the Lady Superior the information that *my sister had determined to take the vail*. I could not, I would not believe it! I appealed to Vero-

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nica herself. She confirmed the report of the Lady Superior. Her answer was conclusive. I was overwhelmed with affliction. I would not give her up. I said and did every thing I could think of that might affect her resolution. In vain! I used argument, persuasion, entreaties, *tears!* To no purpose; but it seemed to fix her determination more firmly! Let me do others justice also. The Lady Superior, the sisters, the Chaplain, all thinking perhaps that her ignorance of life in the world, and her serene life in the convent might have unduly biased her inclinations, had tried to prevail on her at least to delay her purpose for a few years—to go out and see the world she proposed to abandon before giving it up forever. They wished, in fact, to take no unfair advantage of her ignorance and inexperience. The arguments and persuasions satisfied their own ideal of strict justice, but had no sort of effect upon Veronica's resolution, unless, as mine did, they confirmed her determination. She was infatuated—mad—as the sequel proved. Nearly frantic with grief, I took my leave of Veronica the same day. Our Chaplain consoled me. He assured me again that every possible delay should be made, while every means was used to test the sincerity of my sister—that there was little doubt that she, like many others, would reconsider her resolution—that very few were the "called, chosen, and faithful" brides of heaven. Again let me be just to the convent. Every means were in fact used to test the strength of my sister's resolution, but only with the effect of settling her more firmly in it. Never was a new postulant admitted with more caution, for all seemed to feel her step premature and ill-considered. She was kept two years in the convent as postulant before being permitted to enter upon her noviciate.

I, alone and lonesome, went out into the world with something like the feelings of a poor prisoner just released from a long imprisonment, knowing few, caring for none.

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I went to see Veronica take the white vail of a novice of the Order of Mount Carmel. Let me describe to you the ceremony of her

TAKING THE WHITE VAIL.

The chapel was full—even crowded. Such a rare event ever attracts a great crowd. I sat among them broken-hearted, and wishing for death. Presently, the door on the right of the altar opened, and the bishop, preceded by two priests and four sacristans, entered and took their places at the altar. In a few moments after, the door on the left of the altar opened, and a procession of nuns, headed by a cross-bearer, and chanting "O Glorioso Virginum," entered, and slowly approaching the altar, ranged themselves before it. In the midst of them was the new postulant, my young, my beautiful, my glorious sister Veronica! I *saw* nothing now but her—I *felt* nothing but death. High Mass was celebrated I know, but I did not see it. A sermon by the bishop followed, but I did not hear it. All that came next, passed like a sickly dream. At the conclusion of the sermon, a hymn to the Virgin was chanted. Then Veronica was led by the Lady Superior up the steps of the altar—and kneeling there with clasped hands and bowed head—her golden ringlets drooping, and her white drapery trailing down the carpeted steps—was interrogated, as follows, by the bishop.

"My child, what do you demand?"

"The mercy of God, and the holy habit of religion," replied Veronica, in a sweet, clear voice.

"Is it of your own free will that you demand the holy habit of religion?"

"Yes, father."

"Reverend mother," said the bishop, turning to the Lady Superior, who remained near the postulant, "have you made the necessary inquiries, and are you satisfied?"

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"Yes, father," replied she.

"My child," resumed the bishop, turning to Veronica, "have you a firm intention to persevere in religion to the end of your life, and do you hope to have sufficient strength to carry constantly the sweet yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ solely, for the love and fear of God?"

"Relying on the mercy of God, I hope to be able to do so."

The bishop then arose from his chair, and extending his hands over her head in benediction, said—"What the Lord has begun in you, may he perfect. May the Lord banish from you the old man with his works."

"Amen," responded the novice, while the priests intoned the solemn chant, "In exitu Israel," at the end of which the nuns took up another and more cheerful strain, singing in clear liquid tones, "Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved? Thou art all fair, my beloved, meek and beautiful. Come from Libanus, my spouse—come from Libanus. Come, thou shalt be crowned." After this song died in melody away, the Lady Superior receiving from the bishop the girdle of the order, fastened it around the waist of the young novice, while the bishop said, "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou would'st, but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." Then holding the blessed vail over her fair head, he said, "Receive the white vail, the emblem of inward purity, that thou mayest follow the Lamb without spot, and mayest walk with him in white, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." The Lady Superior then adjusted the vail, and Veronica rising, received the mantle of the order from the bishop, and handing it to the Lady Superior, was arrayed in it—while the bishop said, "May the Lord restore to thee the robe of immortality,

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which thou didst lose in the prevarication of thy first parents, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Being now arrayed in the full habit of the order, Veronica again knelt, holding her blessed taper, while the bishop, after sprinkling her with holy water, prayed in an audible voice, extending his hands over her. After which, turning to the altar, in the name of the young novice, the bishop chanted the "Regnum Mundi," &c.

"The empire of the world, and all the grandeur of this earth, I have despised for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and toward whom my heart inclineth."

Then the choir of nuns took up the strain and sung—"My heart hath uttered a good word, I speak my works to the king, I have chosen to be abject in the house of my Lord Jesus Christ, Glory be to the Father," &c. As the chorus finished the "Quem Vidi," the young novice prostrated herself before the altar; the bishop, priests, sacristans, nuns, all knelt while the solemn "Veni Creator" was sung. Many prayers followed. Then the young novice rising, approached the Lady Superior, and knelt before her—she rising embraced her, while the nuns approached in quiet succession, and gave her the kiss of sisterly love. After which they retired again to their seats, while the whole choir burst forth in the joyous "Ecce quam bonum." At the end of which the bishop pronounced the benediction, and the holy sisterhood retired in the orderly procession in which they had entered. The congregation dispersed.

I was the last to leave the chapel. I left it, heart crushed.

I believe I was always then a shy, unsocial boy. I lived at home without even getting acquainted with my domestics. I found no friends, not even *business* friends. I had not even business connections—no particular tailor—no particular hatter. I furnished myself with what I needed at the

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first shop that presented itself always. I suffered in my loneliness. Perhaps it was my own fault. I seldom, very seldom visited Veronica: it was such a mockery then to see her face within a grate, and her form swathed in the shroud-like white bands, and draped with the white mantle and vail of the order. Twelve months from her entering upon her noviciate, she took the black vail. Let me recall the day of her

TAKING THE BLACK VAIL.

The ritual of the assumption by a novice of the black vail, that is to hide forever the world from her eyes—the pall that is to cover forever the brow of the living dead—is, let me tell you, if you have never seen the august and solemn ceremony, much more profoundly imposing than that of the initiation of a mere postulant by the reception of the white vail.

For weeks before the important day arrived, a rumor of a novice being about to take the black vail, went all over town and country. The awful ceremony was, even then, so rare in this country that an immense crowd gathered; and from the earliest hour of its being opened, the chapel was crowded. I repaired to the chapel slowly and with a dying heart. I arrived late, and finding no seat, was forced to take a stand in one of the aisles near the altar. It was a beautiful, gorgeous and solemn autumn day—the warm, still, sun-rays, poured richly through the stained glass of the gothic windows, flooding the church with glorious, though mellowed light. Amid the great crowd an awful silence reigned—an awful stillness, too, moved only by the quivering of the gorgeous, many-colored sun-rays.

Presently, as before, the door on the right hand of the altar noiselessly swung open, and a train of sacristans in robes entered, preceding the bishop, priests and deacons, in their canonicals, and followed by the holy brotherhood in

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long procession, and took their places within, before, and about the altar—the bishop occupying the centre.

The door on the left now swung noiselessly open, and a procession of the holy sisterhood entered, preceded by a cross-bearer, while the choir chanted as before—"Veni Creator." They ranged themselves, quietly and solemnly, before the altar.

The novice approached from among them, and knelt before the altar. The act of profession, with pen and ink, lay near her. The bishop now intoned from the altar the solemn "Emitte Spiritum tuum," &c., "Send forth thy spirit and they shall be created," while the novice responded, "And thou shalt renew the face of the earth."

Then followed a prayer by the bishop, at the close of which he blessed the black vail, that lay near the altar. Then a chant was intoned alternately by the bishop and the candidate before him. Next a prayer, at the end of which the bishop sprinkled the black vail with holy water, and in the name of the Blessed Trinity, at the close of which rite the gospel for the occasion was chanted by one of the officiating deacons. The Lady Superior and the Sub-Prioress then led the novice to the grate, where she was interrogated as follows, by the bishop within.

"My child, what do you demand?"

"My father, I most humbly beg that I may be received to the holy profession."

"My child, do you consider yourself sufficiently instructed in what regards the vows of religion and the rules and constitutions of this institute? And do you know the obligations you contract by the holy profession?"

"Yes, my father, by the grace of God."

"May God grant you perseverance in your holy resolution, and may he deign in his mercy to consummate what he has begun. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

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After this the organ pealed forth its rich tones at regular intervals, announcing the solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost. During all this time the novice continued kneeling before the altar—the Lady Superior on her right, the Sub-Prioress on the left. At the end of the Mass several prayers were offered up, several psalms chanted, and then the Sub-Prioress, taking the lighted taper from the hands of the novice, laid the act of profession before her. She arose, took it up, approached the grate, and holding it in her hand, chanted the "Vota mea Domini," &c.: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the sight of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord." Then kneeling again, the Comfiteor was said, after which, the bishop pronouncing the "Domine non sum dignus," &c.—"Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof,"—approached the grate bearing the Holy Eucharist, which he held before her while she thus pronounced her vows—reading—

"In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and under the protection of his immaculate mother, Mary, ever virgin, I, Veronica Burleigh, called in religion, Sister Veronica Giuliana, of the Most Holy Trinity, do vow and promise to God, perpetual poverty, chastity, obedience, and the service of the poor, sick, and ignorant, to persevere unto the end of my life in this Institute of our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel, according to its approved rule and constitution, under the authority and in presence of you, my Right Reverend Father in God, Paul Peter Andrews, Bishop of this Diocess, and of our Reverend Mother, Catherine Wilmington, called in religion, Ignatia, Mother Superior of this Convent of our Lady of Mount Carmel, this 28th day of October, in the year of our Lord, 18—."

Then writing her name, and making the sign of the cross after it with the pen, she passed the deed to the Lady Superior, who knelt at her right hand.

The most interesting—the most awful moment of the

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august cerimonial had now come—the moment when, having pledged herself to her divine spouse, she was to receive in return, his pledge and earnest of mystical union; that instant was arrived when the bishop, repeating the following words, administered to her the Holy Eucharist—"What God has commenced in thee, may he himself perfect, and may our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen."

Turning from the grate, and kneeling to the lady Superior, Veronica received from her hand the consecrated ring, while the whole choir rang out again in the "Veni Spousa Christi;"—"Come Spouse of Christ." Veronica then sang with solemn and touching effect—"Suscipe me, Domine," three times, in honor of the Blessed Trinity. Then kneeling, she received the Black Vail from the bishop, who said, while placing it on her head—

"Receive the holy vail, the emblem of chastity and modesty, which mayest thou carry before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen."

Then rising from her knees, and standing up, holding her lighted taper, the newly-professed nun sang the "Posuit Signum;"—"He has placed his seal upon my forehead," &c. Then followed the august rite of the bishop's benediction from the altar—responed to in every clause by the now kneeling nun. Then was chanted the "Regnum Mundi," at the end of which Veronica prostrated herself, and while thus lying metaphorically dead, the glorious "Te Deum" arose from the whole holy brotherhood and sisterhood in full choir.*

* I have had repeated opportunities of seeing the ceremonies of taking the White Vail and the Black Vail, at the Convent of the Visitation, at Georgetown. Nevertheless, for this authentic description, I am indebted to a rare volume kindly loaned me for the purpose, by a Roman Catholic clergyman. I thought that the ceremony would be interesting to most of my readers, as among even the few who have opportunities of witnessing the rites, there are fewer still who can get near enough the altar to see, or are sufficiently familiar with the ritual to follow the rapid enunciation of the officiating priests and deacons in the services conducted in *Latin*.

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I saw no more. My head reeled. I felt that the shroud, the coffin, the pall, the grave, had swum in darkly between me and all I loved on earth. I do not know how I left the chapel.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SECRET CRIME CONTINUED.

> Ah! wretch believed the spouse of God in vain,
> Confessed within the slave of love and man.—*Pope.*

I WAS ill for a long time after that ceremony. When I recovered, the world had lost its charms, if indeed it had ever possessed any for me. I resolved to follow the example of my sister. I determined to enter the priesthood.

I re-entered my college, and commenced a course of theological reading the same year. I became interested in my studies—strongly attached to my chosen vocation. I grew to think that I was called to it. I think so still. I grew quiet—then cheerful. In due course of time I was appointed to this same ministry. Here I made many friends, found congenial pursuits, and was very happy in my calling, until one day, when I received a letter from the Reverend Lady Superior of the Carmelite convent, of which Veronica was a professed sister. Imagine the overwhelming sorrow with which I learned that my sister had fled her convent, abjured her religion and married! Bowed to the earth with grief and humiliation, without saying one word to any one as to the cause of my journey, I suddenly left this neighborhood and repaired to the convent, to learn there the particulars of the flight. All that the Abbess had written was confirmed, and more was told me. Veronica had fled,

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and the companion of her flight was a handsome, gay, and fascinating man of high rank, and of irreproachable reputation certainly—whom, by the way, I had sometimes seen in my father's house, and who, the last year of our stay at home, when Veronica was about fifteen years of age, had paid the beautiful child rather marked attention. How he found access to her again, how he contrived to wile her away, no one knew. They were married by special license at one of the protestant churches. He had forced the sisterhood to give up, or perhaps they had voluntarily yielded the considerable property she had brought to the institution. I learned that he had taken her home to a small farm in one of the lower counties of Maryland, that formed an item of her property, and where they were now living. I was deeply grieved, but this marriage was beyond remedy, of course. I returned in deep mortification to my pastoral charge. I wrote many letters to my sister, exhorting her with every argument and persuasion in my power, at least to return to the bosom of the mother church. I wasted a great deal of controversial theology upon her, to little or no effect. I never received an answer; I doubt whether she ever got my letters; I have much reason to believe they were intercepted by her husband. Finally, in despair of ever receiving a response, I ceased to write to her. Years passed; and then, thinking that time might have brought some change favorable to a free communication between us, I wrote to her again, but received no answer. A second time I ceased to importune her with letters. Several years elapsed, and then came a yearning of the heart for the companion of my childhood, that obliged me to set out on the long, rough, country journey, to visit her. I traveled on horseback, and it took me six days to reach the mouth of the Patuxent, where her farm lay. I arrived at nightfall, finding there the aged overseer, who had always farmed the land for my father, during his lifetime. The old man, with his aged wife, now occu-

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pied the farm-house. He invited me into the large, old-fashioned parlor, where his wife received me with much cordiality. He took my hat and gloves, laid them aside, gave me the easiest arm-chair in the cosiest corner of the ample fire-place, and set a little stand with a pitcher of cider and a tumbler by my side. Then requesting his old wife to hurry supper, he drew the other great arm-chair to the opposite corner of the chimney, and sitting down prepared to entertain me if I were inclined to conversation. I lost no time in inquiring after my sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Joy. He gave me the following facts, which I shall, for convenience sake, put into my own words.

When Frank Joy first brought his bride home he furnished the house with much taste and elegance. Her mother's and her father's old friends—the most exclusive of the county aristocracy—flocked around them; the story of her elopement from a convent had preceded them, but in that protestant neighborhood, only made the beautiful bride more an object of interest and curiosity. Great attention was shown them, especially as her family was one of the oldest and most extensively connected in the county. On their parts also, the rites of hospitality were munificently dispensed.

A series of elegant little dinner-parties, and very select *petit soupers* were given by them. These were more *recherche* than the entertainments of the neighborhood usually were. They were greatly admired, as also were the accomplished host, and beautiful hostess. This was, or seemed, a very charming change to the simple recluse, who now found herself a great lady (on a small scale), the centre of an admiring circle of friends.

A severe winter advanced upon them, however; the snow was two feet deep on the ground, the waters of the bay near the shore were crusted, the river was closed, the free interchange of visits in the neighborhood was interrupted; ladies certainly could not get out in that severe weather; their

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visiting was embargoed. Not so the hospitalities of the Coast House. A succession of select and elegant oyster suppers and champagne parties, for *gentlemen only*, replaced the former entertainments. From these, of course, Veronica was absent; but Frank Joy, with all his elegant accomplishments and graceful fascinations, was there in power—and so those select suppers attracted the elite of ——— county. Veronica was certainly very much alone at this time, and would have felt very lonely doubtless, but that her husband loved her sincerely, earnestly, passionately, and that consoled her fully for the loss of all other society.

An event soon occurred, however, that seriously interrupted her happiness.

One night when she had retired to bed at an unusually late hour, leaving her husband at supper with his friends, she fell into a sweet, deep sleep, from which she was suddenly aroused by loud and angry words in high contention. The excited tones came from the supper-room. She started in terror from her bed. The chamber clock struck three. She listened. The voices grew sharp and fierce in conflict; and "Cheat!" "*Swindler!*" "GAMBLER!" were the terms of reproach she heard scornfully coupled with her husband's name. She did not hear his voice in denial—smooth, graceful, slippery, and fascinating as a serpent he seemed. She heard his melodious tones without catching the words.

But a flash of light had fallen on her life, and revealed many, many obscurities she had not been able to understand before. Meanwhile the high, arrogant and overbearing voice was loud in its epithets of "Gambler! *blackleg!* SHARPER!" insultingly bestowed upon her handsome and accomplished—her beloved Frank! Dressing herself quickly, she descended to the supper-room, threw open the door, and stood pale and trembling within. The voice that had been high, sharp and fierce in angry and scornful invectives a

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moment before, now instantly ceased. With that chivalric —nay, with that almost religious homage which Maryland men, even in moments of high excitement or intoxication pay to women—they all became quiet and gentlemanly as soon as Veronica made her momentary appearance among them. Only her Frank moved toward her in his graceful manner, and looking in her face with a fascinating blending of tenderness with command, drew her arm within his own, and with gentle force, conducted her from the room back into their own chamber.

"Remain here. I will return and explain soon—soon as I get these infernal fellows—I mean gentlemen away," and he left her.

An instant after she heard his sweet melodious voice defending himself with persuasive but ignoble eloquence. She had been religiously brought up—educated in a spirit of love, charity, and forgiveness—yet, if these charges were false, she would have had her Frank, rather thrust them down the throat of the charger, than plead his defense in this sweet melodious, tone! and if *true*—but he loved her dearly, she knew it, she would *ask* him. No! she could not do *that* either! *Ask him!* that would be to insult him; should *she* insult him also—*she!* just after he had been subjected to so much contumely—no, no, no! *never!*

Presently she heard the company disperse quietly—his eloquence, or their consideration for herself; or both had prevailed. Frank tripped lightly up the stairs—entered laughing, laughing gayly. Oh, how she wished he had not laughed. Whether true or false the charges—that *laugh* was too ignoble then. He crossed the chamber—threw himself gayly and gracefully into a chair, and drew her to his bosom.

"My pet, my soft, my delicate, my trembling little pet. So they woke you up with their noise, and terrified you with their violence."

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Nothing could be more soothing, more affectionate than his manner. She replied:

"Well, never mind now. It is all over, dear. And you are very good, instead of getting angry as some men would, because I came in upon you then, only to feel sympathy with my womanish tremors. I am not given to such trembling, however; I never was."

"My darling, I have so much sympathy for these womanish tremors, that if they ever alarm them again, the brutes, they shall never come here again; that is all."

"'Never come here again!' I hope some of them will never *dare*. Oh, Franky, keep your forbearance, your tenderness for your little spoiled wife—not for *them;* resent, punish such insult as you forgave to-day."

"'Resent, punish,' is that the advice given by my little nun?" he asked, gently caressing her.

"Indeed it is, Franky. I can bear offense *myself*, but I can't endure to see *you* bear it. I cannot, *indeed*, Franky. Oh, *please* stretch that man at your feet, with the poker, the very next time he calls you such names; *do*, Franky; it is *I*, your timorous little wife, who loves you, too, that asks you to do it, because I cannot live to see you bear insult."

"What! knock down General Hector Mountleopard, a man four times my weight, and twice my age, dear?"

"Yes. If age don't bring *respectability*, I do not see why it should be *respected*."

"Ah! but suppose in knocking him down with the poker, I *kill* him, and am hanged for it, how then?" asked Frank Joy, with a charming archness.

"Oh, I never thought of *that*. I never *once* thought of *that*. I only thought of the insult deserving punishment. I only thought of enforcing a respect to my Franky's dignity—"

"Yes, you impulsive little creature. It is your charming red hair, that makes you so fiery-tempered. For it is *red*,

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you little vixen. Golden, your admirers call it. Yes, but it is *red*-gold. Kiss me, darling, and forget all the rude brutes that have disgraced themselves and terrified you this evening."

She was soothed, not satisfied. All the next week there were no suppers. At the end of the week, a handsome set of jewels arrived from Baltimore for Veronica. It was with a gay affectionate smile that Frank displayed them before her. Veronica had, just at this time, an almost childish passion for dress; this was, of course, the greater for its novelty; the reaction of her renunciatory enthusiasm at the convent. "The greater the sinner, the greater the saint," is a familiar proverb. The converse of that appeared to be true in Veronica's case. For a time, amused by her baubles, she almost ceased to think of the incident that had troubled her so much at the supper.

A dinner-party was given, at which, among other guests, appeared General Hector Mountleopard; but notwithstanding Frank's warning to her, and his gay and smiling request to her, to be courteous to *all* his guests, Veronica met the general with a freezing hauteur, that with all his arrogance, seriously discomposed that gentleman's self-possession. At the end of the dinner, Frank looked grave and displeased, for the first time in their married life; and Veronica was unhappy. For what purpose could Frank be so servile to an arrogant and purse-proud man, who had grossly insulted him? And why should a man like General Hector Mountleopard, appear again at the table of a host whom he had degraded with such epithets as "Sharper—Blackleg?" But the latter question was more easily answered. Few, indeed, could resist the fascinations of Frank Joy's sunshiny temper and sparkling wit—and that singular look of candor in his broad white open brow—with its clustering black curls. (Look at Harry's, it is the same brow.)

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Weeks passed, and still the handsome, gay and alluring man, drew constantly around him the gentry of the neighborhood. Veronica had a great concentrativeness of mind. Any important idea that once seized her—possessed, absorbed her. Little things were constantly occurring to feed and keep alive the suspicion excited by the quarrel at supper. As Winter advanced toward Spring, she could but observe that the county ladies neglected her. Proud and shy, she kept at home. Her husband was amassing large sums of money, she knew—by what means, she did not know. The warm, affectionate, confiding intercourse, that had hitherto existed between them, was cooling off. It was not—she felt it—from any declension of love on either side; it was because some wrong thing had come between them.

One day Frank Joy had a large dinner-party. The company sat late over their wine; and then kept up their revels all night. Veronica did not sleep at all. The noise assisted her mental anxiety, and kept her awake. At dawn of day, the wild, disorderly company broke up. Frank Joy came, gay, laughing, roystering, but sober, up the stairs, stopped Veronica's questionings with a kiss, and began to pack his portmanteau for a journey.

"Why, where are you going, Franky?"

"To Baltimore, on sudden business," he answered; and the next hour he embarked in a packet that passed, and was off sure enough. She afterward discovered that the "sudden business" was the deposit of a large sum of money in bank, which he did not deem it safe to keep about the house. In the course of that day a carriage rolled into the yard. A venerable lady, clothed in black, descended from it, and leaning on the arm of a young fragile girl, tottered feebly toward the house.

Veronica, from the windows of her sitting-room, recognized Mrs. Martha Downs and her grand-daughter—Mrs.

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Mountleopard, the youthful wife of General Mountleopard. This was the first visit Veronica had received for many months; and it took her rather by surprise. She threw a large thin shawl about her shoulders, and went down to meet them. They were already in the parlor. There was a gravity upon the face of the old lady, a distress upon that of the young one, that startled Veronica with a vague presentiment. She went up to them and welcomed them, courteously offering her hand. The old lady gravely withdrew hers, and immediately opened the subject of her visit. She spoke in severe terms of their (Frank and Veronica's) having allured her son-in-law to their house—led him into intoxication and gambling, and won large sums of money from him; of his having, the preceding night, been made drunk, and swindled out of an immense amount of money. Shocked and indignant, Veronica's red, "golden-red" hair fairly bristled with scorn and anger. And she said it was not to be supposed that she knew any thing about her husband's amusements among his gentlemen guests—but that it was very absurd to hint, far less to say that he, who was almost a boy in years and in thoughtlessness, should be able to tempt a veteran sinner like General Mountleopard.

"Ah, you think we don't know. You think we are deceived by your affectation of youthful simplicity. But we know—all the neighborhood knows that you two are in league; that your husband is as great a rogue as you are; that with your youth, beauty, wit, fascinations, you charm all the young, and delude all the old of the neighborhood, to their destruction. All the county know that you keep a gambling-house, and the authorities are already advised of that circumstance. And I come to counsel you to refund, and save yourselves from the vengeance of the law, and my unfortunate son-in-law from utter ruin."

Language can ill describe the mixed and blended emotions of scorn, anger, suspicion, and shame, that raged in the high

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spirited woman's bosom. She grew white. She arose from her chair, tottered to the corner of the chimney-piece and pulled the bell-rope. A servant entered.

"Show these women out," she said, with cold and ashen lips, and trembling, left the room.

That night Veronica was prematurely confined of a dead infant. A fortnight after, when Frank Joy returned, he found her still dangerously ill.

She recovered.

But neither the loss of their child nor the extreme illness of Veronica, arrested the downward course of the infatuated gambler. If it were a fact that he drew men to their ruin with an irresistible fascination—it was also a fatal truth, that he himself was the charmed victim of a passion, a fiend who was his tyrant.

I described Veronica as possessing a high spirit and an ardent temperament, great concentration of mind, and intensity of feeling. It was in vain, now, that Frank Joy sought, by his charming caresses and sparkling sallies of wit, to beguile her thoughts and feelings from dwelling on the disgraceful facts recently confirmed to her. Perhaps no one, not even her husband—ah, least of all *he*—no one but myself, her companion from the cradle, could estimate the violence of the mortal struggle that now convulsed her soul—the struggle between her passionate attachment to her husband, and the high uncompromising sense of honor that urged her to oppose to the death, all that was evil in his character and conduct.

He *had* been to her a sort of oracle—an embodiment of her high ideal of moral and intellectual excellence. It was because *he* had looked upon her monastic vow as a superstitious act, that *she* had been led to view it in the same light. That was the infatuation of passion. But now she discovered, with what extreme anguish of soul, few who did not know her would understand—that her beautiful, her

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accomplished, her most excellent one, for whom in her fond and blind idolatry she had abandoned her convent and her religion—whom in her madness she had suffered to take the place of all intermediate between her soul and God—was—what? Gambler, cheat, COWARD. She never even in her thoughts, degraded him with these names—yet this was what she gradually *felt* him to be, even as she would feel the approach of *death, for it killed her.* But I am anticipating. As she recovered temporarily from her illness—the orgies at Coast House were revived in tenfold energy. She utterly, and to the death, as I said, opposed them. Had she not loved Frank so truly—taken his faults to heart so bitterly—suffered *vicariously,* one might say, all the bitter remorse and humiliation *he* should have suffered; had she been content, as some women are—comfortably to take all the good her husband could bring her, and quietly to wash her hands of all the evil through which it came—*then* she might have been happy in this world—might at least have been free from personal inconvenience—personal violence; for Frank loved her if he loved any thing. Perhaps she did not go the right way to work, to reclaim him. Perhaps she could not have reclaimed him at all. At all events, when once assured of his vice—when once all barriers of esteem and delicacy were thrown down between them, she bitterly upbraided him; sternly and stubbornly setting her face against his proceedings. Frank's good humor was great, but not invincible. This opposition from her at last aroused his anger, and many quarrels occurred between them. Veronica was no patient and resigned victim; neither was she a weeping and wailing one. No, the same fire of temperament, that burned with such intense devotion when fed by religion—blazed fiercely now when blown by a righteous anger—for it was righteous in *itself,* only evil in its *excess.* Often when he would be holding his revels below, she would suddenly appear amidst them with her red hair flashing, and her eyes

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blazing with indignation, and by the mere power of her moral force, however injudiciously exerted, disperse the revelers; but oh, these scenes would be followed by others of great, of revolting violence, when once the guests had departed, and they were alone together—and the beautiful, fascinating and debonair gentleman, would be transformed into a perfect demon of vengeance and cruelty. Professed nun as she had been, she was naturally neither saint nor angel—only a beautiful, high-spirited, woman; she therefore took no sort of ill-treatment patiently; but alas! her fragile form did not second her high spirit, and she suffered frightfully at these times. She might have evaded all this, by leaving him; but she would not do that. Like almost any other unperverted woman, she felt that any sort of a life *with* her husband, was better than any sort of a life with*out* him, (only she was determined not to second, but to oppose his evil doings;) and so thought Frank by his wife, and fiercely as they quarreled, he would have done any thing on earth, except give up the gaming-table, before he would have let her go.

So passed the year.

The first of the next January—having, locust-like, stripped the neighborhood as nearly as he could do it—Frank Joy left the Coast House under the care of the overseer, and left the State.

His departure was as sudden as a flight. "

* * * * * *

What I have now told you was partly gathered from the lips of the overseer, and afterward from those of others—some details long afterward from my sister. I inquired where they had gone. The overseer informed me that they had no stationary home, but that now their Post Office, when last heard from, was New Orleans. I wrote to my sister that night, and mailed the letter the next morning, at the first post-town I passed on my return home. I bitterly re-

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proached myself for not having visited her neighborhood before, though then two hundred miles through the almost unbroken wilderness between these settlements and the settlements in the lower part of Maryland, was a very perilous journey to undertake. I received no answer from my sister. The old overseer died the next year—I heard it long after by a mere chance—and the old Coast House was shut up. Several years passed, and still I heard no tidings of Veronica. I grew to think she was dead. I became extremely interested in my parish; formed a strong and lasting friendship for several of my parishioners, among whom were then old Mrs. Darling, in the very noon of her life and beauty, and Colonel Summerfield, who afterward married Miss Darling, and became the father of Imogene. The two families of Red-Stone Hall and Oak Grove gradually took the place of my blood relations in my heart. They were as dear to me as mother and father, sisters, brothers, and children; and they repaid my love a hundred fold. I was to them as a son, a brother, or a father. Many years passed away, during which I heard nothing of my sister. Many changes had taken place in my secluded parish. The children I had christened when I first entered upon my clerical duties, were now grown up—some of them married; but there were girls who had married young, and mothers whom I had christened were now bringing their infants to the baptismal font. My sister seemed forgotten. Her name had long since ceased to be mentioned. Her mysterious disappearance with her husband had become an obsolete "tale of old times," and I had grown to think of her only as a brilliant and transient light—a meteor that had flashed upon my early path of life, and disappeared forever; as a fierce young spirit early perjured, early rebellious, quickly fallen, and quickly called to her dread account; or, I thought of her distant, unknown grave, where her bones had long since moldered into dust,

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when one day, I received sudden news of her that—great God!—that suddenly, unexpectedly, blindly, fatally, led me into the perpetration of that crime, the contemplation of which turned my hair snow white at forty-seven—the memory of which has darkened all my days with remorse, alarmed all my nights with terror!

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SECRET CRIME CONTINUED.

> Aye! Heaven and earth do cry "Impossible!"
> The shuddering angels 'round the eternal throne,
> Vailing themselves in glory, shriek "Impossible!"
> But hell doth know it true.—*Maturin's Bertram.*

MANY times during the recital of this story, the old man had paused and rested. Now he stopped to take some refreshment, and then, strengthened and calmed by the composing manner of his young attendant, went on with his story.

There is nothing that strikes me with more force than the often utter unconsciousness of a great criminal, before the crime, of the terrible precipice of guilt upon which he stands. "Is thy servant a *dog* that he should do this thing?" was the honest and indignant question of the self-ignorant Hazael to the wise, far-seeing prophet. Even so honest would have been the indignant repudiation echoed from the very heart of many a criminal, if foretold his crime a week, a day, an hour before its perpetration. Sudden, unexpected, almost irresistible temptation, falls upon an unprepared soul; passions aroused to almost maniac fury,

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nearly or quite overwhelm reason and self-control; such is the history of most crime. He who was free from crime as the greater portion of his fellow beings when he lost his self-possession, finds himself a criminal at whose deeds a world shudders—*when he comes "to himself;"* and ah! there is nothing on earth or in hell so wretched as his remorse. The lesson should teach us this:—Great pity for the criminal; strict watchfulness over our own dangerous passions.

I was one day reading in my small study a rare old illuminated volume of the fourteenth century, that Mrs. Summerfield, during her then late bridal tour, had picked up at New York, and just presented to me. My feet were on the hob, for it was a chilly day in September, just making a fire comfortable. *I* was extremely comfortable in mind and body, little dreaming that I was then enjoying my very last hour of earthly ease—that in twenty minutes more the first of a series of events should occur that should deprive all my future of peace. Had any one in that hour of easy enjoyment foretold a sudden calamity of which I should be the victim; a fire that should consume me; a fall from a horse or a carriage, that should kill me; a sudden illness that should carry me off, I should not have been *scornfully* incredulous at least—for such things happen in in some part of the world every week; *but*, had any prophet or angel foretold a sudden crime of which *I* should be the perpetrator, I should have felt like repulsing the prophecy in the indignant language of Hazael, "Is thy servant a DOG that he should do this thing?" Well, to go on—I was sitting in ease and comparative innocence, when Mattie came smiling in—she was a woman of early mid-age then—and laid upon my reading desk a letter. I took it up carelessly; I had no correspondents of much interest. I started slightly, however, when I noticed the post-mark, Green Mills—the

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superscription was in a strange hand to me. I broke the seal, and merely read:

"*Coast House, near Green Mills, September.*

"MY ONLY BROTHER:—If possible you are yet in the land of the living, and yet resident at Sacred Heart, where I shall direct this letter, hasten immediately to

"Your only sister in extremity,

"VERONICA."

I rode like lightning to Squire Darling's. I borrowed the swiftest horse in his stables, and that same night set out for Maryland. I rode as for life. Oh, no one knows or could ever know how I loved that long lost twin sister of mine—my only love from infancy to age. I hurried on, half delirious with joy, expectancy, and—*fear*. "Extremity!" *what* extremity? Extreme *illness—death*? Should she be *dead* when I should reach Coast House? I shuddered and hastened faster on. Perhaps it was only extreme *poverty*. That indeed might have been reasonably predicted from the wild, improvident course of their lives. Ah! if poverty were the extremity, how easy to spare from my own provision enough to sustain her slender wants—or, had she children? A hundred thoughts, anxieties, anticipations rushed through my mind as day and night I hurried on, still blaming myself for an unchristian loss of self-possession.

I had nearly killed Squire Darling's valuable "blood," by the time I reached Green Mills. I left him exhausted at the inn and hastened on, on foot, to Coast House. I knew something of the present condition of the old homestead from hearsay—the house nearly ruined—and standing alone in an acre or so of thistle and weed-covered land—the farm sold and annexed to surrounding large plantations—a few squalid huts in which vegetated a few wretched old

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negroes, past service, who were suffered to keep a foothold on their native soil, and gain a meagre living by trapping small game, fishing, wool-picking, knitting coarse stockings, etc.

That evening! What an evening it was! It was growing dark, and an army of storm clouds were mustering in the northwest, as I approached Coast House. I heard the dull booming of the bay against the cliffs like the opening of a cannonading. The naked house loomed large and black through the dusky night. I clambered over the broken heaps of stones that had long ago formed the wall, and with a heavy, heavy sinking of the heart, went up to the great door of the formidable-looking black front. I rapped, and my rap echoed mournfully—hollowly through the vacant and deserted halls. All was dark and silent—and in the stillness I heard the muttering of the coming storm and the booming of the bay. I rapped again—feeling faint with vague terror—again the cannonading of the bay against the cliffs was the only sound that fearfully broke the silence. I turned the handle of the lock and pushed the door open; it *fell* with a heavy, loud clang, that aroused all the roaring echoes of the cavernous old house. I felt ashamed of the nervousness that shook me like an ague as I passed on over the fallen door, and opening a side door on the right, went into the room that *had* been the family sitting-room of old. As I entered, the lurid light of a smoldering fire in the ample fire-place, revealed the form of an infirm woman who had risen from her seat, still holding on the arm of the chair, supporting her frail form.

"Did you not hear me knock?" asked I.

"Hear you knock! No; how should I hear you knock amid the noises of this place? I hear only the wind roaring through the house, window-frames shaking, sashes rattling, shutters sometimes falling off; a door fell just now.

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But what do you want? *He* is not here, if you are one of *them*."

"I want—I want— Is Mrs. ——? Do you know whether any of the family of the proprietor is about?"

The woman was looking at me wistfully, searchingly—then, sinking back in her chair, she exclaimed, almost inaudibly:

"My God! *my brother*."

"Veronica! Oh, no, no; this is *not* my sister."

I knelt down before her, took her hands, and gazed intently into her face. I could read there not one single look of my sister. The features were different, the expression was different. Could this old and haggard woman possibly be Veronica? I was pierced through with a real and painful doubt as, kneeling, I held her hands and gazed into her face.

"Am I so very much changed, then?" she asked.

"Changed! You are revolutionized; you are *ex*changed, if indeed you ever were my sister. Oh, *Veronica, Veronica! my sister, my sister!*"

I dropped my head weeping upon her lap, and her head fell upon mine, and her arms entwined me. When this was over I arose and sat by her side.

"Have you eat any supper?" she asked.

"No, Veronica; nor have I any appetite to eat."

"Yet you must do so," she said; and, going to the old corner cupboard, she took out a little tea-kettle, and filling with water from a bucket on a bench, she hung it over the fire, and threw on more chips from a pile near at hand. It seemed, indeed, as if the sitting-room of the ruinous old dwelling served as parlor, kitchen, scullery, wood-shed, and for every other purpose.

"Veronica, since you will have supper prepared, let *me* prepare it. Heavens, how feeble you seem!" said I, ashamed now that I had let her lift a hand to serve me.

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"Ah, I am accustomed to these things. I have cooked for Frank a long time," she said, drawing out a little table and setting some mismatched crockery-ware upon it; after which she dropped trembling and fainting into the chair; and I saw with grief how much the little effort had fatigued and exhausted her.

"Ah, Veronica, of all our people, is there none left to wait on you?"

She smiled.

"Christie takes care of my little housekeeping, but Christie goes to her Quarter at night. Besides, this evening I want you to myself."

She got up and made the tea; put a corn johnny-cake and a piece of cold roast rabbit on the table, and invited me to sit down. I did so to please her, forcing an appetite I did not feel."

"To-morrow, if you stay with me, you shall have some oysters," she said; "old Tom is going down to the oyster-banks to get some. You never get them where you live up there in the Virginia mountains; they will be a welcome old rarity to you."

Oh, it hurt me so to hear her talking of small paltry comforts for *me*, while she herself seemed to try to conceal some great grief that yet her heartbroken look still betrayed.

"My poor sister, I thank you. But do not trouble yourself about my eating; it is giving undue importance to a trifle. I shall do well enough. I am neither invalid nor epicurean."

"Ah, well; perhaps I *do* give 'undue importanee' to the subject; but then it is habit. I have been caterer and cook for an epicurean all my life nearly."

This was the second time Veronica alluded to this fact. After supper I would not permit her to wash up the dishes, but pushed the table back myself and drew our chairs to the fire, which I mended and made to blaze brightly, and

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sat down. I looked inquiringly into Veronica's face. Up to this time I had not asked her a question of her life, nor did I intend to trouble her with one, but resolved to wait until she should voluntarily confide in me. I did not even know whether her husband was living or dead; whether, if living, he were with her; whether they had any children; or, indeed, any other fact of her late married life. She replied to my look of interest by saying:

"I wrote to you, my brother, under a sure conviction of approaching death, in order to confide to your care one charge—the child of my old age."

"Your *old age*, my sister—my *twin sister!* Why, I am in the prime of life, and the few silver threads mingling with my black hair were whitened by trouble, not *time*—trouble for *you*, Veronica."

"I am sorry for that. Yes, my *old age*. Some materials wear out sooner than others, and some have harder usage than others. I was of a material quickly worn out, and of a spirit that quickly consumes such; besides, I had much usage and bad usage. I have led a wild, wild life since I saw you last. I am aged at forty-two."

"Ah, Veronica, my sister, my sweet sister, I know it. I have heard something of your sufferings before you left the States. *Oh, the wretch!*"

"Hush. Let no idle words be spoken. I sent for you to give into your charge my last gift, a legacy—the child of my old age, as I said—whose advent I am daily expecting—whose birth I can never survive. I am too old, too broken. I have suffered too greatly and for too long a time. I have been the mother of children already, and never possessed two living at the same time. I have seen them perish, one by one, from exposure to the inclemency of the weather in cold climes; from the baleful miasma of hot, unhealthy countries; from want, fatigue, ill-usage, from which I had not always the power to shield them, or neglect

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which could not always be avoided. Their very graves lie far apart."

"Have you led such a widely roving life, then, Veronica?"

"Listen," she said, and then she gave me the following account. I will not repeat what I have already told you, namely, that which I learned from the old overseer, but continue her story from the point at which he left it; or, rather, from an event that occurred a few days before they left the State, and I will tell you in her own words.

"Things had gone on in this way, after the loss of our first child, from bad to worse, until one day, when I was sitting in my chamber alone, he suddenly ran into the house and up the stairs, and, breathless, said:

"'Veronica, prepare instantly to set out with me from here.'

"'In the name of Heaven, what do you mean!' exclaimed I, terrified at his blanched countenance and trembling frame.

"'I have no time for explanations—none; my liberty, my life, depend upon my instant flight; but I will not leave you. Be ready; we must take the packet that passes here in fifteen minutes.'

"All the time he spoke he was wildly emptying a wardrobe of its miscellaneous contents, and, rapidly packing them into a trunk, while, with the speed of fear, he locked and strapped it down, and, hastily calling two men, dispatched them with it to the beach.

"'Fire and flames! Why do you stand gazing there?' he angrily asked of me.

"As one in a bewildered dream, I put on bonnet and cloak, and he, drawing me after him, hurried down and out of the house, and fled to the beach. There, while waiting the passage of the packet, his agitation defies all description. His furtive glances thrown out over the country—his sudden

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pallor when the sound of horses' feet were heard upon the distant road—all betrayed the extreme terror of a criminal in mortal fear of pursuit and arrest. The packet passed at length, stopped, put out a boat, took us on board, and, in an hour from the time of my sitting quietly in my chamber, I found myself unexpectedly on board of a schooner flying between Baltimore and Norfolk. We reached the latter city late in the night. A vessel was to sail for Charleston, South Carolina, by the first morning tide. We embarked on board of her, and in due time reached that city. There I thought we might have rested and breathed. Not so. He inquired for a vessel for New Orleans. One was to sail in a few days; and it was with the greatest restlessness and the utmost trepidation that he awaited the time of sailing. He changed his name, dyed his hair, and kept quiet. The day came; we sailed. We reached the city of New Orleans. We put up at a fashionable hotel. The first thing I saw on the parlor table was the daily paper; the first paragraph that met my eye was the advertisement of a reward of five hundred dollars, offered for the apprehension of a forger to the amount of twenty thousand dollars, and the name of that forger was Francis Joy, of Coast House, Green Mills, Maryland. I was not given to fainting, screaming, weeping, paleness, or any other interesting feminine tremors. I think that grief, fear, mortification, every feeling, was lost in a storm of unutterable scorn and anger. He just then hurried into the room, and met my eyes flashing with a consuming wrath, no doubt, for I felt them so; and—for I was never either a *weak* or a *meek* woman, brother—we should have had a terrible scene, without any sort of doubt, but that he, who had seen the advertisement, fearing to trust too much to his disguise and change of name, had come in to hasten our departure. We went to the city of Mexico. He had a very large amount of money with him. I think that before he fled he had taken time to

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draw all his money from the various banks in which it had been from time to time temporarily deposited. I think, also, that he had placed the arrangement of his business in the hands of one of his comrades, who remained behind, and who also *cheated* him, in refutation of the adage which tells us there is 'honor among thieves.' The forgery—you heard of it, my brother?"

"Never; nor is it strange that I should not. Few papers reach our secluded neighborhood, and those few are weeklies, from which all unnecessary matter is expunged; besides, I was indebted for my reading of newspapers to Squire Darling and to Colonel Summerfield; and it is likely that had the advertisement, or any notice of that forgery appeared in our papers, they would have carefully withheld them, and concealed it from me. You must know, also, that though I constantly *thought* of you, dear Veronica, I never *spoke* of you. As for the forgery, things of that sort follow each other with such lamentable rapidity, that a new instance quickly supplants an old one in public thought."

"Yes, that is so," my sister said, and then continued:

"We lived in Mexico two or three years. He had a very large sum of money, as I said, and made a great deal more; and so we lived in style. He spoke Spanish like a native, and had lost none of his fascinations. I saw victim after victim ensnared and lost. I never ceased to expostulate with him; and where another and a gentler woman would have wept, *I* upbraided. It was my nature to quarrel rather than to cry. And he would, sometimes, when I had, in my utter scorn of his courses, said something to him almost too plain and bitter ever to be forgiven, gayly attribute it to my 'red hair,' and laughingly caress me. Ah! it was because he was such a splendid fellow, *ruined*, that in spite of his gigantic faults I loved him so passionately, quarreled with him so fiercely, and would have reformed him violently, since it was not in me to do it gently. Ah, yes,

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he was a magnificent failure—a splendid ruin! He had no faults toward *me*. He had no infidelity toward *me*. In all our married life, he was faithful to *me*—in thought as in deed. I know and feel it. Notwithstanding all our fierce contentions, he loved me through all. He loves me still. Gray-haired, haggard as I am—while *he*, though older, retains all his pristine strength and beauty—he loves me still. Though at last I have abandoned him, he loves me still. He will love me ever—he will come here to seek me. He had magnanimity toward *me*. When we have quarreled violently, and I, in the very frenzy of anger at seeing one I loved so well, acting so wrongly, have said words no other man on earth could have forgotten or forgiven, he has freely forgiven them, laying them all upon the scape-goat—the 'red hair.'"

"And did these contests always end so quietly?" I asked, recollecting what the old overseer had told me of "personal violence," even before they left Maryland. "Did these affrays always end so quietly?"

Her pale face flushed over.

"Alas, no! How could it be so? Generally, indeed, my bitterest reproaches were met with a caress, or, at worst, with a jest, and his worst word in rejoinder would be 'Red hair;' but there were times when, under the influence of wine, he would cruelly abuse me. These instances were rare, and followed by a bitterness of regret and self-reproach on his part, that I never knew him to feel for any other act. He ever seemed to think that he could never do enough to convince me of his sorrow. He would tell me, what indeed I knew from my experience of him, that intoxication generally metamorphosed a person, totally reversing, for the time being, their natural disposition; making the naturally ill-tempered good-humored and gentle, and exciting the good-natured and cheerful to irritability and anger. I could easily forgive him all his abuse of me.

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It was, at worst, only a piece of savage human nature to strike when angry. Alas, there are more disgraceful things than *that* in civilization, and for those things I continued to disagree with him. In this way we led a wretched life, certainly, though we were too strongly attached to each other to separate. He took me with him, opposing his manner of life all the time, in all his tramps through the country; and I, in spite of every inconvenience, was very willing to go. I think when people quarrel and part, there is certainly no love at bottom. We quarreled like two very bad children or two tigers, loving each other dearly between the times. Yes, positively, we quarreled until, not our *love*, but the *meaning of words* was worn out with constant use, and the abuse meant nothing. We stayed in Mexico several years—in the city of Mexico two or three years. You and others will think we were very wrong to contend so. Our quarrels, at least, were of my getting up. I could not patiently see him go on as he did, even though I should reap the benefit; neither could I leave him upon any account. Twice I was arrested with him, when we were both indicted for keeping a gambling house. I, of course, had nothing to do with it, unless my constant and unremitting opposition was 'aiding and abetting' the unlawful enterprise. Yet I was positively better contented when equally sharing all his bad luck. We were compelled to leave Mexico; we dared not yet return to the United States; we went to Havanna. We spent several years there. There we had another child—a little girl that lived a whole year, and grew very dear to her father; and to me she was a treasure and a consolation beyond value. I lost her in the second summer, and then my health failed.

"Ten years had now passed since we left the States, and thirteen years since our marriage.

"We returned under another name, and lived about in various places in the South for four or five years. I had,

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in the course of those years, two other children—little angels, who seemed to have just flitted through this world on their swift way to Heaven. One grave is in the prairies of the Northwest Territory, and one in the forests of Kentucky. Do I tell you this waste of life coolly? I did not take it so. Look, my hair is quite gray, and I am, you know, but forty-two. We led a tramping, vagrant life. Now he would be joined to a gang of counterfeiters—now one of a company of traveling gamblers.* In all his tramps I was by his side, often the only female in a gang of from six to twenty men; always exposed to rudeness, often to insult. He would not permit me to remain behind, nor would I have consented to stay. I was ever by his side, frequently expostulating, opposing, upbraiding. You would have thought, in so many years of opposition, that I would have grown weary of the task and and abandoned it: not so. I had an untiring spirit; though always, *always* his companion, I was *never* his accomplice!

"Within the last few years his temper had become very gradually soured and irritable; his habits of intoxication increased fearfully upon him. I suffered often and frightfully from his violence of anger and frequent drunkenness.

"We were in Mississippi with a gang of bogus coiners, when I made the discovery that I should probably bring another babe into the world, to perish from want and exposure. He and his gang were traveling in a caravan, in the guise of harmless emigrants. Many miles of fatiguing travel, many days of anxiety and nights of sleeplessness and exposure, had at last made me ill—very ill—so ill that I was obliged to stop. They left me in a woodman's cottage on the banks of the Mississippi. He left me my trunk and

* In the wandering life of the adventurer's wife, I have invented no fiction, but simply related facts—taking care to suppress all that was most improbable in their real experience. I had the story from one who had it from the lips of the suffering wife.

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a considerable sum of money—every cent he himself had, in fact, and as much more as he could wrest from the reluctant pockets of his comrades. He gave me in charge of the woodman and his wife, exhorting them to take the greatest possible care of me, and promising munificent pay when he should return in a month.

"He took leave of me with visible reluctance, returning again and again to press a kiss upon my feverish brow, and to repeat his charges and his adieus. As for his comrades, I believe they would have been glad, only that they must have regretted the loss of their cook and seamstress, for I made their coffee and sewed their buttons on. A few days' rest and peace restored me—I was up in a week. Oh! I cannot make you understand how highly I appreciated the quiet, secluded sacredness of that little humble family circle—the honest, hard-working woodman and his industrious wife, and their aged parents, and their young children, supported by their hard but honest work. I, who had lived for nearly twenty years a vagrant, wandering life, the strolling companion of counterfeiters and blacklegs, it seemed to me like Heaven to be there—a peace was falling on my spirit. Strange, though this was my first parting with Frank, and though I had always dreaded such a parting above all things, yet now I did not feel it very painfully; every painful feeling was lost in a sense of peace and rest, a feeling of cessation from evil doing. Impossible, my brother, to make you or any one else comprehend, who has not experienced it. After that, I began actually to dread the coming of Frank, and my forcible reunion with the band. I began to wish *ardently* for some quiet, secluded place, where I could give life to my babe in safety, and rear it in peace, perchance in goodness.

"You know that I was always impulsive, impetuous. Well, I formed the sudden resolution of returning home—returning here. For me to make a resolve is to execute it.

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I wrote a letter to my husband, explaining my reason for leaving—packed my trunk—liberally paid the woodman and his wife for their care of me—and the day before Frank was expected to repass again on his way South, I left. I believe our boats passed each other, as I was going up the river and he down. Well, I arrived here about six weeks since. Old Christie and Tom did not at first know me, but they soon recognized me. I have not been happy since I came, however. The foreshadowing gloom of approaching death darkens over my spirit. I feel that I shall not survive my child; I feel so more than ever to-night. My brother, promise that you will stay with me till all is over. It will not be many days, perhaps not many hours."

"I promise; but, dear Veronica, do not give way to such mournful thoughts; your first half of life has been very wretched; that is a sure earnest that the latter half will be blessed and happy. No long life is miserable from youth to age, and yours will not be."

"*If I live*, I believe you. No life was ever wretched from youth to old age, and mine will not be—*if I live*. But I shall not live, my brother; I feel it. Bear with me."

At that moment a sheet of intense and blinding lightning flashed forth, filling the scene with insufferable radiance, followed by a clap of thunder, whose report seemed to shake the foundations of the earth. The storm that had been gathering all this time, had now broken out with fury. Amid the rattling and rolling of the thunder, was heard a loud resounding crash, and a heavy, continuous, tumbling fall. Some part of the old building had been struck, and was tumbling down. Veronica was pale, but self-possessed. I seized my staff, and ran out to see the amount of the damage done. A broad sheet of lightning illuminated the landscape, and showed me a wing of the old house in ruins. While gazing on it, a wild shriek arose amid the storm, and rang through the house. Another—and another!—each,

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more despairing than the preceding. I rushed into the house, staff in hand, struck open the door of the sitting-room, where I had left Veronica, and there I found her, struggling fiercely in the strong, rude grasp of a tall, dark, iron-framed man, with the most diabolical countenance I ever saw. I saw her carried off, helpless, in his arms. I lost my senses. I threw myself on him furiously with the uplifted stick, shouting, or trying to shout—"Put her down!" and the next thing I recollect, my victim was lying dead before me, and the stick had fallen from my hand. I missed Veronica; she was not there; I did not know *where* she was gone; I did not care. I saw nothing but the dead victim before me; I felt nothing but blood-guiltiness and terror, and this was so extreme, that I turned deadly sick, dizzy, and blind; my knees smote together numbly; I shook with an icy coldness. I cared not for Veronica now; I cared for nothing—thought of nothing—saw nothing—felt nothing but the terror that was within, and the terror that was before me. I thought I had the nightmare. I smote my temple hard with my doubled fist. I bit the ends of my fingers to wake myself up. I tried to shout for Miss Mattie to come and shake me; but the words died inarticulately in my throat. I was smothering—suffocating in blood. I struggled—shuddered—partially recovered—still as one under the influence of somnambulency. I picked up my victim, and hurried through the tremendous storm toward the bay. Oh! how ghastly the green, pale face of that corpse shone in the terrible flashes of lightning! How I prayed—how I *tried* to wake up! I hurried toward the tempestuous bay. Pitch dark as the sky was above, the waters of the bay were luminous as with a phosphorescent light, and rolled toward the shore like a sea of greenish fire. I lifted my victim aloft with a giant's strength; and as I prepared to hurl him into the wild waters below, I thought I should surely start and wake.

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That was a crisis in the horrid dream that *must* arouse me. As I threw the corpse in I heard the plunge, saw the tempestuous and fiery waters open, sparkle, flash, and close; and the horrible—the seeming dream—passed into insensibility.

When I awoke, the rising sun was shining broadly aslant the morning landscape—the herbage was all glittering, sparkling with dew—and the bay flashing in the sunlight, brightly, gladly, as if it had never felt a storm, or opened and closed over a murdered corpse. I was dripping wet, and fearfully confused in intellect; a vague horror was resting heavily on my soul, which I could neither shake off nor interpret. Gradually, as recollection returned, I experienced a sickening terror, but at first not remorse. I felt as though I had been cheated by Satan into the perpetration of a crime while in a fit of somnambulency, and indignation and terror—the feeling of a deluded and entrapped man who had still something more to fear—the feeling of a victim, not of an injurer, possessed me. All this time I was getting upon my feet and tottering toward the house. I entered like a culprit, half insane. I had a vague intention of finding out Veronica, and seeing how much *she* might know of the transactions of the night, which were by this time taking quite a distinct form in my memory. I entered the house—two or three old negroes were in the wide passage—some knew me and saluted me. I thought they would wonder at my soiled and wet clothing, but they did not appear to notice it; they were indeed taken up with a matter of far more importance. I passed them, and entered the sitting-room; there I saw two old white women who had lived in the neighborhood; they had known me as a young man; they recognized and spoke to me. I inquired for my sister; they looked at me with eyes full of pity, and one of them conducted me up-stairs and into a chamber, where I found a group of poor neighbors gathered around a bed upon which my sister lay—*dying*. On the lap of one of the

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women near her lay a new-born infant. When Veronica turned her dying eyes on me, they pleaded so plainly—"Come to me, my brother," that I made my way through the neighbors, and stood by the side of her bed. Still her eyes were turned pleadingly to mine, and I bent my ear down low to catch her faintly whispered words:

"It was Franky who was here last night."

I nodded—I had not been certain of it before.

"Where is he?"

I shook my head. She looked earnestly at me, and then turned her failing eyes toward her child. I raised it, and laid it before her. She fixed her eyes in silence upon its little face, and then raised them, eloquent with love and pleading, to my face. I stooped down again, to give her an opportunity of whispering:

"You will adopt her as your own?"

"Yes, I will; indeed I will."

"You will educate her yourself?"

"Yes, *indeed* I will."

"In the Catholic faith?"

"Do you wish it?"

"Yes. I am a Catholic again."

This little conversation had exhausted her. She lay silent a long time. She signed for her babe to be placed near her face—was raised, and kissed it—then fell back. She did not speak much after that. She died within an hour.

Did I grieve for the lost sister—found at night, to be lost in the morning? No, oh, no! something far heavier than any grief oppressed me. Perfect memory had returned, and filled me with corroding remorse. A remorse I have borne ever since. My sister's funeral took place on the third day. My appearance there (I mean in that neighborhood,) was so natural that it caused no gossip, even in a gossiping community. Frank Joy's sudden arrival and sudden disappearance, was evidently unknown. I placed

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my little niece out to nurse in the neighborhood—again shut up the house, and returned to Sacred Heart with death, yes, with *hell* in my soul. It was not till I found myself again in my comfortable library at home, among my books and papers, that I realized to the utmost the terrible thing that had happened to me. My hair turned perfectly white in a week. "See how he loved his sister," said my kind and confiding parishioners—but they were wide of the truth. Veronica, alas! much as I *had* loved her, deeply as under other circumstances I should have mourned for her, I thought not of her now; every affection, every emotion was swallowed up in one absorbing remorse. At the end of two years I went down again into Maryland, and brought back with me my little niece, Harriette; whom I named after our mother, at my sister's request. I even took Harriette the more as a satisfaction to the manes of the father, than as a memorial of love for the mother. Ah, *no* feeling, none, could divide the empire of my soul with the one possessing, absorbing, consuming remorse. Harriette keeps that alive—she has not one look of her mother—she has the very features and complexion of her father. Frank Joy's countenance laughs out to me from Harriette's face. Years—years of utter misery, have passed. Purgatory cannot be—hell cannot be worse than my remorse. Oh, often have I wished that accident might reveal that guilt which I lacked the moral courage to confess. And yet, with strange inconsistency, at the slightest chance of discovery, I would turn sick with terror. In such unutterable sufferings had passed half a century, when the evil destiny of the neighborhood sent Sina Hinton here. Until her arrival, I had supposed my dreadful secret confined to my own burning soul. Soon after her arrival, for purposes best known to herself, she particularly sought my acquaintance, and my ear in every—in every company where we met. An inexplicable look of Frank Joy in her face sickened me from the first.

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"Yet she is not at all like Harriette, whom you assert to be the image of him."

"*Both* are; and yet, as you say, they are not at all like each other. But it is not unusual. Take the face of almost any of your acquaintances—observe how different—how opposite it appears at sundry times—yet you are so familiar with this change—this metamorphosis, that it does not strike you. But notice again, there may be two children of the same parent strikingly like the parent, yet totally unlike each other. Resemblances do not lie alone in features, complexion, or even expression; but in the curves and lines of the *spaces* between the features to which the habitual *spirit* gives a character. It is in this instance as though Harriette, with her father's complexion and features, had inherited her mother's spirit, which gives them *character*. It is as if Sina, with some one *else's* features and complexion, had caught a *similar spirit to that of Frank Joy*. Or, to make my meaning still more clear—suppose that at birth a human being becomes possessed of a good and an evil spirit, (or inclination,) and that he transmits these in turn to his children. If Harriette and Sina had been sisters—both closely resembling their parent—in Harriette would predominate the *good* spirit, in Sina the *evil*."

"May they not possibly have been half-sisters?"

"Preposterous! Sina is the child of Charles Hinton, a poor Irish gentleman, of good descent, and of Mary Darling, a distant relative of Squire Darling. They were married in Georgetown at least three years after—after—after *that fatal night upon the bay*. Sina was born the second year of their marriage, five years after the—the death—well, the *murder* of Frank Joy," said the old man, shuddering. He continued: "She, Sina Hinton, knew my secret, by what inexplicable circumstance I do *not* know. She, by dark but alarming hints, discovered to me that she

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knew my crime. She used her knowledge as a constant terror to me—used it as a handle by which to wield the great and unmerited influence I held over my wealthiest parishioners. By that means she grew into the favor and affections of Mrs. and Miss Summerfield—of Squire Darling and his family; by that means she obliged me to perform the marriage rites between Edgar Ardenne and Winny Darling; by that means she held me inactive when I would have mediated between the parent and the child; by that means she won through me the high esteem of Colonel Dangerfield, even before she allured his love; by that means she betrayed Miss Summerfield into making her confession where her betrothed could hear it; by that means she has brought about all the misery that has befallen us; her object, the possession of the Oak Grove property—her *end*, to be caught and killed in her own trap. A hundred times I have, of late, been on the point of this revelation; a hundred times have paused, as much from horror of overwhelming with affliction the Summerfields, who love me as a father, and of killing, outright, old Mrs. Darling, my friend for fifty years, who never, never could survive the shock of the discovery, and all the terrific train of events that must ensue. Why do I at last confess? at last, when my safety seems otherwise secured by the death of my only foe? *This*, then, is the reason: I feel the near approach of DEATH—so certainly, that there can be no doubt. I am sure I shall never rise from this bed; far less, live to meet the exposure, the disgrace, the scorn of esteemed friends, the arrest, trial, condemnation, SCAFFOLD—all that appalled me through life—making me bear what I truly believe now to be the greater punishment—unmerited love and veneration, SECRET REMORSE."

"Father, you have, with the exception of that one SIN, lived a most exemplary life. Who so self-denying, so prayerful, so charitable as you?"

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"Alas! it might deceive the world—it never comforted me!"

"Father, do you know that the only fault you have to reproach yourself with—yet, after all, it is the fault of which men least like to be accused—is COWARDICE; or, perhaps, to speak more gently, a want of moral courage? And that want of moral courage is *one* of the most—if not the *most* fruitful cause of all the error, sin and suffering on earth. I have another case in my mind besides your own. Father, review your supposed crime. You hear screams—you rush in to find your sister struggling—then being carried off, fainting, in the arms of a ruffian—by one fell blow you stretch the man lifeless at your feet, and straightway, in terror at what you have done, lose your self-possession, your self-control—lose *yourself* altogether—become a mere half-maddened animal, actuated by the mere brute instinct of self-preservation, and seizing your victim, fly with him and hurl him into the abyss of waters. Grant that all that was the effect of a terrific delirium of the nerves, produced by excessive fright and horror—still, if in the days that followed your sister's funeral, you had gone to a magistrate, made a deposition, and invited an investigation, you would have been saved a lifetime of misery. You have suffered all this from the sin of cowardice and concealment. Oh! when I see the unutterable misery ensuing from one single sin on earth, I shudder at what the retributions of eternity may be."

"I thought of making such a deposition, but shrunk from doing it. Every day of delay made the declaration more difficult—years rendered the revelation nearly impossible. Who would have given credence to my statement? Who would not rather have supposed it to be an endeavor to shift off a portion of the weight of remorse, or of fear, by making a miserable compromise with conscience, and telling a part of the truth? What evidence had I to present of the truth of my story?"

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"Strange, that your mind, which moves with such power, clearness, and decision, in the affairs of others, should be so weak, and clouded, and uncertain in your own concerns. Did you make no account of the ability and readiness of Providence to assist you? It is as I said. Indeed, moral cowardice is the fault with which you have to reproach yourself?"

"Alas, alas! not for *that* have I felt this bitter remorse, but for BLOOD-GUILTINESS!"

"Father, drink this cordial," said Vellemonte, holding a glass to his lips. He drank it off obediently. Vellemonte set the glass away, and taking the thin old hand within his own, he looked with earnest meaning in the priest's face, and said: "Father, this venerable hand is free from the stain of blood. Francis Joy, this supposed murdered victim—LIVES!"

"WHAT!" exclaimed the old man, starting up with the energy of youth, and staring wildly in the face of his young companion. "*What!*" again he exclaimed. "Speak again! Am I mad? Am I sane? Do I dream, or am I awake, or did you say?— Holy Virgin, I am losing my reason, for I understand you to say— Ha! ha! ha! You will laugh at me—that—but don't laugh at me—that—pity the poor old man whom remorse has nearly, or quite maddened—that— Oh! it is too wild even for a madman's brain—that—bear with me—that Frank Joy, whom I murdered, lives—*lives*!—LIVES!!—LIVES!!! Ha! ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha! h-a-a-a-a-a-h!" and he fell back in strong convulsions.

I have heard Mr. Vellemonte say that no joy ever was seen or conceived to equal *his* joy—the joy that nearly killed him with its excess. No human heart, receiving back its best beloved from the arms of death—no criminal, pardoned on the scaffold, could feel, could conceive the delirious joy of this wild soul, frantic in its exultation at deliverance from

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the guilt of blood. "LIVES! LIVES! he has LIFE! LIFE!" These were the words he repeated over and over again, in a perfect ecstacy of rapture. Ah! the deep despair of his former remorse could only be weighed and estimated by the delirium of his present joy. He made Mr. Vellemonte reiterate his statement many times, while he himself echoed it in jubilant, insane gladness. He asked for no particulars —seemed to care for none—no fact could excite the least interest beside the overwhelming truth that swept all else from his heart and mind—possessing, absorbing both, and expressed in the two words, "HE LIVES." It took all Claude Vellemonte's great magnetic power to calm him at last—nor could he effect this for a long time. He gave him a powerful opiate, and put him to sleep; but out of the midst of that sleep the old man would bound, and seizing his watcher, forcibly demand—

"Did you tell me Frank Joy is ALIVE—or did I dream? Oh! for the Virgin's sake, speak quickly!"

Then Vellemonte would satisfy him, and then the same scene of delirious joy would be enacted again. Vellemonte remained by his side all night, and left him only in the morning, with the intention of taking an hour's sleep. He left Miss Mattie by the patient's side; but the patient was any thing *but* patient; and no sooner had Claude Vellemonte thrown off his clothes and lay down, than a tap at his door awoke him, and Miss Mattie begged that he would please to come to Father Burleigh, who was "out of his lunacies, and talking such a heap of horrible nonsense;" and Vellemonte returned to the bedside of the invalid, to reassure and recomfort him.

Well! I do not know any thing more stupid in a story of real life, than dwelling upon scenes of illness, unless it be for the purpose of teaching patience, which we shall scarcely learn at the bedside of honest Father Burleigh, therefore I shall pass over the few days that elapsed before

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he was stroug enough, steady enough, and sane enough, to hear the particulars of Frank Joy's escape and recovery.

It was a beautiful Spring day, and the windows of his chamber were open, and the sunshine and the fresh air came in laden with the perfume of flowers and the songs of birds, and Father Burleigh was sitting propped up in bed, among downy pillows and fresh fragrant sheets, and soft comforters, solacing himself with a bowl of chicken soup, while Claude Vellemonte sat, with his health-giving countenance, on one side, and Miss Mattie stood, with her jovial, edifying smile, on the other. In spite of all he had said about dying, he was very much better, indeed, and sipped the savory chicken soup, and smacked his mouth after each sip, in a way that made good Miss Mattie's digestive organs thrill for sympathy and joy. Well, Father Burleigh was not the first man that grief had prostrated upon his death-bed, and that joy had raised from the dead. Neither was he the first man that ever predicted his own speedy death, and turned out a false prophet. Good Father Burleigh eat his soup as if he had taken out a new lease for his life, and meant to nourish his body to enjoy it withal—he then put the bowl to his lips and drained it, and then he asked Miss Mattie if there was any more in the pot? Of course there was, and Father Burleigh got it—"Bless his dear mouth!" Miss Mattie said, as she carried out the empty bowl the second and last time, leaving Claude to amuse the convalescent.

"Now you may tell me, if you please, about Frank Joy's escape, and where he lives, and all about it. God bless Frank Joy, how much I am obliged to him for coming to life. God bless Frank Joy, I love him so much. Is there any thing you know of that I can do to serve him?" said the old man, earnestly.

"How strange your joy is, father! I was about to say,

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irrational. Just contemplate it. Almost without your fault a man loses his life; at least without intending it, you killed him (*you think*), and you are overwhelmed with grief, remorse, and terror. Without your interference—without any merit of yours, the man comes to life—or, *to light!* and you are beside yourself with joy. Now, is this reasonable? *You* are the same man now that you were last week—nothing *you* have done or left undone has produced this change—why now should you be so metamorphosed?"

"Claude Vellemonte, you are irreverent to old age. I command you to read Fenelon on humility and reverence, but first tell me how these things came to your knowledge—*first of all*, ring and tell Mattie that I am hungry again, and ask her to have tea early, with muffins!"

Claude Vellemonte rung the bell, gave this order, and then, with unusual gravity, resumed his seat, and commenced his explanation.

"Father, you were with Miss Hinton at her death-bed?"

"Yes—

> By many a death-bed I have been,
> And many a sinner's parting seen,
> But never aught like that.

I could not bear it—I resigned my post to *you*, with your almost miraculous skill!"

"Yes, I was with her in her last hours. I was with her when she died. I received her confession. I gave her absolution!"

"You received her confession! You gave her absolution!"

"Yes! She had a lucid interval before her death. We improved that. She was not *all* evil—if she had been, she would not have maddened—the good that was in her would not have taken such awful vengeance upon the evil. It is of her confession that I wish to speak. It is at her request

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that I make a part of it, which concerns the welfare of others, public!"

"Claude! Claude Vellemonte! None—*none* but you, could have subdued the haughty and rebellious soul of that evil girl—haughty and rebellious, even in her madness! *None* but you could have won from her a confession, or dared to have given her absolution!"

"Death is a great tamer. She passed away, peacefully as a child—her last breath breathed out upon my bosom. I was not afraid of that sin-bowed young head. You saw her wickedness—you did not know all that made her wicked. 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.' You will feel less hatred of poor Sina, when you know all her dreadful wrongs—her mal-education. It is too painful a subject to relate in detail; neither am I willing to fatigue you with it. In one word, Sina Hinton is really and truly the daughter of Frank Joy, by his second wife, whom he, in the third year of his widowhood, married under his alias of Hinton!"

"You astound me!"

"She was informed of her father's history, and of your connection with it—that you supposed yourself his murderer, while she knew that he lived—thus she had you in her power, through your terror, and not through your guilt."

"Fool, *fool* that I was! Yes, I see it all now! But, *his* escape! Tell me how that happened!"

"Very simply—your blow upon his head had stunned him—you plunged him into the water, whose waves returned him upon the beach immediately—the shock recovering him. He revived—got up—recalled his scattered senses—resolved upon a fearful vengeance on his would-be murderer, and carried his resolution into effect. *What* vengeance could be so awful as that he took upon you—afflicting your whole life with an awful remorse and terror? He lurked about the very neighborhood for a day or two; found out

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the death of his beloved wife—beloved in spite of all his vices—found out your adoption of her infant daughter—was willing that she should be reared by you, *he* intending to claim her when he had sufficiently revenged himself upon you. Mind, he charged you with, and hated you for your supposed persuasion of his wife away from him—for your indirectly causing *her* death and *his* bereavement, and for your deadly assault upon him, and Heaven only knows for how many other imaginary reasons besides—for hatred has many and various inexplicable causes. He dared not remain in the neighborhood, where he was constantly in danger of being recognized and arrested, and to which he had only come in secrecy to repossess himself of his wife. He left it in a few days. He wandered about the country for two years—at last went to Georgetown, took a new name, and after a few months' acquaintance with her, married the daughter of his hostess, Mary Darling, the mother of Sina. He lived very unhappily with his second wife. In the third year of their marriage, Sina was born. They continued to live very quietly with Mrs. Darling until Sina was seven years of age, then the old lady died, and he, possessing himself of all the property she left, converted it into ready money and went off, leaving his wife and child in extreme destitution. Sina's mother was not naturally a good woman, and wrong had made her worse. She evidently brought up her daughter badly. When Sina was sixteen or seventeen years old, she was selected by her distant relative, Squire Darling, as a companion for his daughter."

"Oh, yes; I know all that, and I know her machinations to marry Winny to Ardenne, and supplant her in her father's heart; and I know the torture she inflicted on me, in bending me to her purposes—tell me something I do not know!" said the old invalid impatiently.

"I am about to do so," replied Claude Vellemonte, good-humoredly. "Soon after Sina's arrival here, she received a

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letter from her long-lost father; who, it appears, had never quite lost trace of either of his daughters."

"Either of his daughters! Good Heavens!—why, sure enough! Harriet and Sina were half-sisters! Thank Heaven she is dead!"

"He wrote to Sina, and after a few letters informed her that the priest of the parish where she was, had a crime upon his conscience, out of which she might make her fortune, if she played her cards right. Miss Hinton began to watch you closely. Then her father chanced to inquire in one of his letters, if she had met Harriette Joy, the priest's niece—and to hint that the secret crime was connected with the nativity of that young lady. Immediately, and not unreasonably under the circumstances, Sina assumed the fact that Harriet was not your niece, but owned a nearer and dearer relationship to you—however, the girl in probing your soul as she did, was too cautious not to deal exclusively in generalities. She was in confidential correspondence with her father, however; and it is evident that all her malign plans, with the single exception of her designs upon Colonel Dangerfield, were suggested and encouraged by her father. It was just before the marriage of Winny Darling and Edgar Ardenne, that her father, feeling full assurance of her abilities, confided to her his own history, together with your secret, and supposed crime. This, of course, put you completely at the mercy of the wily girl, and she did not hesitate to use her power."

"No; it was the night before the marriage of Winny and Ardenne, that she told me, in so many words, that she knew my secret, and darkly threatened to deliver me up to the SCAFFOLD. Oh, the pernicious girl!"

"Poor girl!—be merciful. What good precept did she ever hear? What good example did she ever see? She possessed intellect of a high order—courage, spirit, and enthusiasm! With a good moral training, she would have

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made a very superior woman. She was a most noble creature, utterly ruined, as her parents had been before her. God be pitiful!"

"Oh, the pernicious girl—what gratuitous vain tortures she made me suffer!"

"What tortures she suffered herself, though she had the fortitude and courage to conceal them. What tortures! Why, listen!—they closed in madness and in death! Ah! believe me, father, as a general rule, however deeply the *injured* suffer, the *injurer* suffers *more!*"

"Yes, I dare say. Ugh!—the horrible girl! Don't mention her to me again!—it makes me shudder!—my teeth chatter!—a—ring the bell, and tell Mattie I am chilly. I want a nice, hot cup of tea, and some cream toast!"

Claude complied, and then said:

"There is a duty I have yet to perform. Squire Darling must be made acquainted with all the hand *she* had in persuading and misleading the youthful lovers into their ill-starred marriage. At the time I left, he was yet unable to bear any agitation; now, as soon as I can be spared, I must hasten to Oak Grove, and use my best efforts with Squire Darling for the recall of Ardenne."

"Yes, and I will go with you—so shall Harriet. We will all use our united influence. Mrs. Summerfield shall go also; so shall Imogene; so shall Winny; so shall the old lady. Come, we will all reassemble at Oak Grove, as soon as ever I can get up, and that will be *very* soon."

Claude Vellemonte's reply was arrested by the entrance of Miss Mattie with the tea-tray.

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CHAPTER XLII.

IMOGENE AND THE YOUNG PRIEST OF ST. JOSEPH'S.

And now the morning's sun is up
And shines upon that blessed day,
And cheers it with his brightest ray,
And his golden beams are shed
On the penitent's fair head,
As, her sad confession pouring,
To the priest her sin deploring,
In penitential holiness
She bends to hear his accents bless,
With absolution such as may
Wipe our mortal stains away.—*Byron.*

"But, ah! Imogene, what humiliation, what shame; my dear, dear child, what a trial."

"Ah, mother, he bade me measure the extent of my sin by the mortificatiou it caused me to confess it!"

"Ah, my poor girl, what a degradation! would that I could bear it for thee, Imogene. Alas! alas! what humiliation for my Imogene!"

"My sweet, my good, my darling mother! do not weep so. I do not feel it as you say. I feel my heart filed and warmed with a full deep comfort, and my soul exalted by a strange sweet fervor! Dear mother, it is well with thy child!"

"Alas! Imogene, canst thou not guess what will be the probable expiation of thy guilt?"

"I think I can divine it, mother. When I shall have confided my sin of sacrilege to my spiritual judge, he will assign me the expiation of the vail and the convent—"

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"And *thou*, Imogene?"

"Oh, I will accept any doom from his lips with humility, and find a strange, sweet pleasure in enduring it. I will enter the convent and take the vail, and that ceremony will be our betrothal for eternity!" said Imogene with enthusiasm.

"And thy mother, Imogene?"

Language cannot convey the heart-broken tone of bitterest anguish in which the almost bereaved mother put this question. Even Imogene's exalted countenance grew still in a blank expression almost of despair as she said:

"The Mater Doloroso will be thy support, my mother. Think of Mary resigning her only, her spotless, her devoted son to the shameful and agonizing death of the cross for the sins of others; bow to the will of Heaven, and thou shalt be strengthened to give up thy erring daughter to the easy expiation of conventual seclusion and prayer. You will find a child in every suffering daughter of earth that thou canst succor, my mother!"

"Ah! Imogene—dost thou think that I can replace thee so easily? Oh, Imogene! shall *I* remain in the world when thou art gone? No, child, no! I will not forsake my own old mother! I will cling to her while her earthly life lasts; but then, I too will offer my remaining days and my great sorrows to God within the walls of the cloister."

Deeply distressed by the despair expressed even more in her tones and looks than in her words, Miss Summerfield turned and silently pressed her mother to her bosom.

This scene occurred upon the morning of Easter Sunday, the day set aside for the assigned penance of confession. The carriage was waiting below to take the mother and daughter to chapel. They entered it, and were driven to Sacred Heart.

It was a glorious Easter Sunday; all nature was waking up in joy. Never was the earth so green and fresh, the sky so blue and clear, the sunshine so bright and glancing;

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never were the flowers so abundant, so beautiful and fragrant; never were the birds so numerous, musical and glad. It was yet very early as they alighted at the church door, and entered Sacred Heart. The congregation had not yet begun to assemble. The church was empty. Mrs. Summerfield took her seat in her own pew, and Imogene having embraced her mother, silently left her there to her private devotion, and reverently sought the Tribunal of Confession, where, by a previous appointment, sat the young priest of St. Joseph's as spiritual judge. She dared not trust herself to look up at the grave though youthful and beautiful countenance of her spiritual guide—but she felt the face of an archangel beaming down on her. Silently she knelt at the grating, folded her hands upon her bosom and bowed her head in prayer. Then, without change of posture, her full rich voice was heard in low tones pleading:

"Father—I have sinned against heaven and before thee. Bless me, father, because I have sinned."

The fair hands of the young priest were extended and fell lightly, softly upon the beautiful and shame-bowed head—the radiant countenance of the young priest shone brightly, warmly over her, and his harmonious voice responded in tones of fullest blessing:

"May the Lord be in thy heart and on thy lips, that thou mayest truly and humbly confess thy sins—in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Again Miss Summerfield lowly inclined her head, and in an almost inaudible voice began the repetition of the penitential words of the comfiteor.

"I confess to Almighty God," &c., &c., &c., but her voice continued to sink and fall, and her color to rise. She paused.

There was silence, broken very gently at last by the encouraging voice of the young priest saying, in a low tone:

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"My child, you should endeavor to bear in mind that you are in the presence of God; that it is to God, in reality, that you open your heart. Win the blessing of Heaven upon your confession by naming *first* the sin, whatever it may be, that you feel most reluctant to confess, for this act of self-conquest and humility will be most acceptable in expiation."

Again Miss Summerfield bowed her head and murmured in nearly inaudible tones:

"I accuse myself of having broken the first and great commandment. I have had another god but one. I have given to the creature the worship due only to the Creator. I have not loved God above all things. I have borne overmuch love to the creature. I have thought irreverently of holy things. I have despaired of God's mercy."

Again her voice died away in silence, and her head drooped lower, fell upon her bosom. He waited for her to recover herself, but she remained silent, overwhelmed. He reached and took her hands, folded them between his own, and, in a voice full of commanding tenderness, said:

"Imogene, name specifically the sin that troubles thy bosom, that I may be able to judge the state of thy conscience. Can a physician prescribe who does not know the nature of his patient's disease and symptoms? Speak, Imogene. Offer, in the serene spirit of self-abnegation, thy strong repugnance in expiation of thy fault; speak, Imogene, I adjure thee."

"Thou hast given me a command I had rather died than obey—but, thou hast given it to me. Listen, then. I have loved *thee*, loved *thee*, more than any other being on earth —more than God. May'st thou—may God forgive me."*

*This singularly trying confession of a sinful passion to the reverend object, was really enforced as the most appropriate and most humiliating expiation to be conceived of. It is one of those things that a fictionist would not invent, and dare scarcely copy from life.

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Overwhelmed with shame her head fell forward upon the grating as in a swoon, but she had not swooned. Silence fell again between them.

At last: "Hast thou any other thing with which to accuse thyself, Imogene?" he inquired, in a low tone.

"None—none," she murmured.

"Hear me, then, Imogene. Your greatest fault has been a want of fortitude and faith in God, in your mother, and your spiritual guide; and that moral cowardice and unbelief has caused your greatest suffering, in leaving your mind to a dark, a blind and a false misapprehension of yourself, of me, and of our circumstances and duties. Had you cleared your bosom of this secret from your first discovery of its existence, you would then have saved yourself and others all the sorrow that has grown out of it. Will you look at me, Imogene? You have not raised your eyes to mine since you kneeled down here. What is there in my face to alarm you? Will you look at me, Imogene!"

She raised her eyes and met the calm, clear gaze of the radiant eyes through which the pure, strong soul shone so truthfully. She felt that there was nothing in those eyes or that soul to shrink from. He took her hands between his own, and, gazing down into her upraised eyes, spoke:

"Can you, Imogene, whenever in the future a sin or a sorrow troubles you, can you lay that sin or sorrow on my heart?"

"Oh, I can; I can, as on the bosom of the Virgin Mother."

"Can you, Imogene, confide every secret of your soul to my keeping?"

"Oh, I can, as to the bosom of my Saviour."

"Will you trust me implicitly with the guidance of your life? Will you confide your earthly and immortal welfare to my care?"

"Oh, I will; I will; so trustingly, so confidently, so gladly; even as to my God."

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The young priest folded his hands together and remained for awhile absorbed in meditation, or in silent prayer. At last, stretching forth his hands as in benediction, he said, in a sweet but solemn voice:

"Daughter, I am about to pronounce the absolution and remission of thy sins."

"But, holy father, my penance—my expiation," murmured Imogene, very gently, diffidently interrupting him.

A singular but inexpressibly sweet, benignant, and happy smile illumined his features for an instant and then passed away, leaving on his countenance an elevated solemnity befitting the confessional. He replied with grave tenderness:

"True, my penitent, thy expiation—do not believe that for a single instant I had lost sight of that necessity; I did but delay thy sentence. The time, the place, and the manner of thy penance I will reveal to thee to-morrow, in thy mother's house and presence. Thy expiation, Imogene, will be the work of thy whole life—nay, it will change the whole course and purpose of thy life; it will affect thy earthly and immortal destiny, and that of others through thee. Thou will find in its course much of trial, much of toil, frequent occasions for self-denial, much of suffering for the sake of others who may, in their ingratitude, disappoint and grieve thee—in short, much of every sorrow; but thou shalt also find *more* of compensation, *more* of well-earned comfort and enjoyment, *more* of gratitude and love from others, *more* of heart-felt, soul-felt, social and religious happiness."

A pause gave Imogene an opportunity of replying; a certain fervor of emotion impelled her to reply. She murmured in tones low, but, oh, so full of earnest feeling:

"I understand thee; I had even anticipated this manner of expiation. My mother is also prepared to hear it. We spoke of it this morning. She is resigned. I understand thy delay, also, and thy soothing, strengthening words.

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Thou wouldst prepare me; thou wouldst comfort and strengthen me to hear and bear the doom thou shalt so compassionately pronounce. Fear not for me; it will not be bitter—the fate. It will be *sweet*, coming from thee. Fear not; I accept it. Only *one* thing will I plead for: thou wilt be present at the ceremonials that shall seal my destiny; thou wilt, if possible—if it may be permitted—*thyself* receive my vows, *thyself* place the vail upon my brow, the ring upon my finger!"

"It shall be so, Imogene. I solemnly promise thee to be present at thy religious espousals; and, Imogene—" here he took her hands, folding them between his own—"Imogene, look up." She raised her eyes to his, that were looking full upon her. They gazed into each other's eyes till soul met soul, and then he continued, in a tone of sweet solemnity: "And, Imogene, that ritual will seal our union for all eternity; dost thou believe it?"

"Oh, I do; I *do*. I do know it so well, feel it so deeply. I used those very words to express that very conviction this morning."

He looked long into her eyes, and then said:

"I am about to absolve thee, Imogene."

She crossed her hands upon her bosom, and bowed her head in the very devotion of reverence. He extended his palms, which descended slowly and fell lightly, softly, upon her graceful head, and said:

"May the almighty and merciful Lord give thee pardon, absolution, and remission of thy sins, and bring thee to life everlasting. May our Lord and Saviour absolve thee; and by his authority I absolve thee from every bond of excommunication, and of interdict, as far as I have *power* and *thou* hast *need*. I, therefore, do absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. May whatsoever good thou shalt do, or evil thou shalt suffer, be to thee, unto the remission of thy sins,

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the increase of grace, and the recompense of life everlasting. Amen."

He ceased. Imogene remained kneeling in silent prayer a moment, and then, rising slowly and reverently, but with a peaceful and radiant countenance, was about to leave the confessional, when their eyes met in a long, earnest gaze. He did not withdraw his, she *could* not drop or vail hers. A strong, an omnipotent attraction seized, maddened, nearly *mastered* her. To turn away from him was not painful—it was agonizing; it was not difficult—it was deathly; not parting from one beloved, but the inevitable, the violent rending in two of soul and body. She passed from the confessional. The light and warmth that had hitherto sustained her—the healthful, strengthening and happy influence of the young priest upon her whole being, seemed abandoned. A change—slowly, coldly, darkly—overswept her spirit. Never did one going from a genial, warmed and lighted home out into the dark night and freezing cold, feel the transition physically so slowly, painfully, as she did spiritually. She reached her pew dizzy, suffocated, blind, swooning nearly, and sinking down in her seat; and, without looking at her mother, she dropped her head forward upon the front of the pew, while her despairing thoughts took something like this shape:

"I shall see him but twice more in my whole life—to-morrow, when he comes, and in his sweet, commanding tones, tells me to enter a convent; when I, intoxicated with his presence, and powerless under his will, shall with a smile, but an illusory smile, accept the destiny, as I did just now. He will then leave me and I shall fall into despair, as I do this moment. Years will pass, and I will vegetate through a loathsome life, like that of a rank aquatic weed on the damp walls of some submarine dungeon. Then we shall meet again, and for the last, last time. And again, and for the last, last time, shall come the short-lived joy, ecstacy, in-

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sanity, of his presence. When he whom I love so devotedly—who loves me so entirely—will place the ring upon my finger, the black vail on my brow, and disappear forever from my view. And then—and then—and then I shall sink into a living death—be inhumed alive. *Shall* I live? Can I exist, a poor, divided being, in a living tomb? Ah, *yes;* for I am the strongest of a strong and long-lived race. We are hard to kill; myself the most indestructible of the whole. Nothing—no, *nothing*—but a conflagration, or some other catastrophe ending in a violent death, can prevent me spending sixty or seventy years of a living death in the grave of a convent."

A strong and fearful reaction was moving within her. Her whole strong heart, soul, and intellect was in open insurrection. Her whole nature rising in terrible and uncompromising rebellion against the tyranny and the violence put upon it. Wave upon wave of passion rolling up from the deeps of her soul, stormed in her tempestuous bosom, exciting there wild and sinful, and, *for her*, unprecedented thoughts.

"Is Heaven itself *worth* purchase at this price, this awful sacrifice? Alas! I madden, I sin! I am only good, I am only strong, I am only religious, I only *live* when Claude is with me, or when I feel that his spirit is near me; as just now at the confessional—as sometimes at home. I am evil, I am weak, I am irreligious, I *die* when Claude is absent, and withdraws his thoughts from me; as now. It is not insanity; it is not falsehood; it is not even fancy: but it is truth—God's holy truth—that I am but the divided and quivering moiety of a human being when separated from Claude's presence, and absent from his thoughts. I cannot! I cannot! I cannot—!"

For the first time, perhaps, in all her life, Imogene, forgetful of her surroundings, lifted up her voice and wept. *Wept!*—nay, her whole soul and body was violently con-

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vulsed; her whole nature for the first time passionately rebelled against her destiny.

The mother and daughter were as yet quite alone in the church; but it was to be expected every instant that some one would come in, that soon the chapel would fill. Mrs. Summerfield, especially fearing such a probable interruption and observation, stole her arm softly around her daughter's waist, and murmured, in gentle tones:

"Imogene, love, the congregation will be gathering soon; if you cannot compose yourself, we had better return home, dear, lest we draw observation upon us."

"Oh, yes! home—home—let us go home!" gasped Imogene; and they were quietly arising to leave the pew, when the deep, rich tones of Claude Vellemonte at the pew-door arrested them. He reached his hand over to Mrs. Summerfield to shake hands with her. The mother's brow crimsoned for an instant at the sight of the young priest, until she met his eyes, so full of strength and purity, when her agitation subsided. The storm in Imogene's bosom was also stilled. The magnetic, the fabled *miraculous* power of Claude Vellemonte was once more felt by both mother and daughter, as he stooped over the latter and said:

"Imogene, what is the matter? Compose thyself, my dear child. Before and above all things, believe in thy Father's love. He who created thee, *loves* thee, Imogene; desires thy happiness. Believe and receive this, for it is true. Hear his words: 'Verily I say unto you, there is no man hath left house, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or land, for my sake and the Gospel's, but shall receive an hundred fold NOW IN THIS TIME—houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions—and in the world to come eternal life.' Thus you see, Imogene, 'Godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of THIS LIFE, and of the life to come.' But, Imogene, to avail thyself of Gospel

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promises, thou must *believe in* and *act upon them.* Imogene, repose on the promises. Be believing. Be calm. Be cheerful. Have a modest confidence in the mercy of thy Divine Parent. Remain here, Imogene. I will see thee again to-morrow." He stroked her brow gently, and was gone.

That day the young priest took for his text the Scripture: "Whoever will lose his life for my sake and the kingdom of Heaven's, shall save it." His text and sermon were singularly appropriate to Easter Sunday, the morning celebrating the Resurrection of our Saviour from the dead; and as singularly appropriate to the state of at least *one* of his hearers. He spoke of the Saviour's voluntary resignation of his life. Of the anguish, the terror, and the failing, dying faith of his disciples, as they witnessed his arrest, his trial, execution, and burial. Of the deep, the utter despair that followed that event. He dwelt upon this picture so earnestly, so eloquently, that even his hearers were carried back, in imagination, eighteen hundred years, and felt that all hope had gone down with the Saviour to the grave. Then, as he turned sunward to the glorious morning of the Resurrection, his whole countenance was transfigured before them, and beamed with an archangelic radiance and power, as he depicted that startling, that electrifying denouement. The surprise, the joy, the ecstasy of the disciples, in hailing again their glorified and risen Lord and Saviour—now proven Lord and Saviour beyond the shadow of a doubt—their renewed and strengthened faith, renewed and strengthened for all eternity. Finally, he drew from this a consolation for all Christians tempted to despair. Their buried love and hope—buried forever in their thoughts—would *rise* again—would rise in joy, in glory, and surprise them into an ecstasy of gratitude and worship!

But I feel that in giving this third-hand report of Claude

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Vellemonte's inspired and most eloquent Easter Sunday sermon, I am doing him injustice. Very weakly do his great, strong words, very coldly do his fiery words, flow through my feeble pen. In fine, there was more than *one* soul raised, comforted, and strengthened that day.

At the close of the services, Claude Vellemonte announced that Father Burleigh had recovered his health, and expected, with the blessing of Heaven, to resume his place in the pulpit upon the next Sunday. That in consequence of that and other circumstances, which would be duly made known to them, his own short and delightful connection with the congregation of the Sacred Heart Chapel would end with the services of that afternoon, when he should take an affectionate and a final leave of his beloved charge. This circumstance, in the event of Father Burleigh's recovery, was too natural and too much to be expected to cause any surprise, how much soever of regret it might and did occasion. The congregation was then dismissed. The mother and daughter returned home. Imogene at least calm, if not happy.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CONTEMPLATED EXPIATION.

Her down-bed a pallet, her trinkets a bead;
Her lustre, one taper that serves her to read;
Her sculpture the crucifix nailed to her bed;
Her paintings, one print of the thorn-covered head;
Her cushion the pavement that wearies her knees;
Her music the psalm, or the sigh of disease.

Griffin—Sister of Mercy.

"Oh, mother, mother, let me seek rest immediately; let me think, let me take time for self-recollection. I know

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not what has happened, what is about to happen to me clearly. I shall go mad in this confusion, this chaos! Mother, I had self-possession and fortitude once, had I not? In the uttermost bitterness of my anguish and remorse, I governed myself, did I not? I retained my own self-respect, and commanded the respect of others, did I not? I can do so not much longer. I hold my self-government by the slightest tenure, that threatens every instant to give way. I have emotions of wildness. Indeed, I think I am going mad! I am not now the same being from one hour to another—exalted one hour into an ecstasy of religious enthusiasm, and plunged the next into the depths of a profound despair; thus the waves of my soul rise and fall, and beat their shores in my bosom. This must be madness, if the mad can be half-conscious of their condition; and yet—and yet—it seems to me sometimes that only my ecstasy is madness and that my despair is soundly rational. Ah, if it be so, let me go mad, kind Heaven!"

"My love! my dear love! my Imogene! you are not mad, or going mad. Yours is a delirium of the nerves—a frenzy of excited emotion. Do not have such dreadful thoughts; dismiss them from your mind. The really insane are *never* conscious; if they were, they would get sane again. You must have sleep, my love, indeed you must!"

"Let me go merrily mad not melancholy mad, kind angels!" exclaimed Imogene, with a wild, hysterical laugh. How unlike herself!

Really alarmed now for her daughter's reason, Mrs. Summerfield with difficulty subdued her own emotions, and sought to soothe Imogene. She used every moral and material means within her reach, to compose her violently excited nervous system, and finally succeeded in getting her to bed and lulling her to sleep. There was no sleep, however, for Mrs. Summerfield. The lady paced slowly up and down the gorgeous but dimly-lighted chamber of her daughter,

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thinking, with deep anxiety, of all the cases of insanity she had heard of, arising from religious fanaticism, where it conflicted violently with some natural law of our being. Then she passed in review the whole history of Imogene's life, since her return home, and all that she had revealed of her life at school. The visions of her illness, it is true, were probably merely the temporary effect of virulent fever; but the visions of her convalescence were a more alarming matter. And after her arrival at home, her profound melancholy, even deepening to gloom; her days of depression, her nights of elevation; and, what was still more dreadful, her violent, opposite, and inconceivable alternations of mood, within the last few weeks—being at one hour so deeply despairing, at another exalted into such a heaven of religious ecstacy, and anon, so ineffably serene; all these things presented themselves to the mother's mind in a new and terrible light.

Yes, yes; wounded affections, violated natural laws, religious fanaticism, were taking a terrible vengeance upon their subject, in doing this work of mental destruction upon Imogene. Her overburdened and overwrought heart and brain were desperately struggling for existence amid the horrors of this furious moral typhoon, and her glorious intellect in imminent danger of shipwreck amid the metaphysical breakers around her.

Now, perhaps for the first time in Mrs. Summerfield's life, a doubt of the righteousness of that ecclesiastical doctrine by which her daughter was made to suffer such extremity of anguish, remorse, and humiliation, which would eventuate assuredly in confirmed madness, arose in the mother's mind; but it was immediately suppressed as sinful.

Not so easily, however, were her too well grounded fears for Imogene subdued. *Nothing but the common life would restore Imogene to sound health of mind and body.* People were not created with five senses, and put upon this

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solid earth, covered as it is with material beauties and pleasures, to *lose* their senses in spiritual abstraction, any more than to degrade them in excessive luxury. *The medium! The medium! There* was right—*there* was wisdom. Mrs. Summerfield now *felt* this, but, for her immortal soul's salvation, she dared not *think it out.* So she sighed and groaned, and paced up and down the gorgeous chamber, till at length she went and prostrated herself before the image of the Virgin, on the elegant little altar we have described before. Here, in silent prayer and meditation, she spent the remaining hours of the night. Meanwhile, from the united effects of mental and physical exhaustion, and of an opiate, Miss Summerfield slept soundly.

At dawn, the lady arose from her knees somewhat calmed, but wearied, and opened the window-shutters, to let in the first faint, gray light of morning. This was not enough to allow her to dispense with the lamp, for she wished to look at the quiet sleeper. But Imogene was not asleep; and as the lady approached her bedside, and stood there, she raised her white arms from the cover, and putting them around her neck, drew down her face to kiss, murmuring:

"My pale mother, you have watched all night."

"Never mind me, love. How are you, Imogene?"

"Calm—every nerve at rest now, dear mother."

"Ah, yes, this is one of your seasons of serenity, my child! Fallacious, illusory it is," thought the lady, looking mournfully at her daughter. Imogene passed her hand over her brow once or twice, covered her face with both hands, lay so for a while, and then looking up, said:

"Do you know Mr. Vellemonte comes here this morning, mother?"

"To take leave of us? Yes, my child, I know it."

"And, mother, to pronounce on me the sentence of my doom; you divined it, mother. Are you, also, prepared at last to hear it?"

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"Yes—yes, my child; and yet—yet—was it for this, oh! God—"

The lady's voice failed—she dropped her head upon the side of the bed and wept. She was accustomed to self-discipline, though; and so she soon stayed her tears, raised her head, and dried her eyes. While Imogene said, slowly and solemnly:

"'Only God is great'—only eternity is permanent. This life will end at last, and you and I, mother, will meet in eternity, never to separate again." Then, after a pause, she said: "There is one thing belonging to time, and to this world, that I must arrange, mother—that advertisement for Edgar—has it been suffered to drop from the columns of the newspapers?"

"Yes, my dear; it seemed to elicit nothing, and I have not ordered its continuation."

"Mother, I wish you to order the renewal of that advertisement without delay; it cannot do harm. It is to be cautiously and delicately worded, as before; and it may at length meet the eye of Edgar, or of some one who knows his place of abode. Alas! you know it is the only chance. My uncle enforced a promise from him, that he would never seek Winny again."

"How wrong that was in Edgar to give it."

"Yes, very wrong; but Edgar was scarcely nineteen; he saw Winny on the eve of becoming a mother, and herself and child in imminent danger of perishing with cold and hunger—for it was the depth of Winter, you recollect."

"He should have let us know his condition."

"Ah, mother! we ought to have inquired into it once more. It was so much more natural in him to seek aid from their father; and you know a mind so distressed as his was then is not always capable of reasoning in the best manner But what we have to do now, is, to bring him back here if possible—then to reconcile my uncle to him; that will no-

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be impossible, if he be made acquainted with all the art and double-dealing which that unhappy girl used to betray them into their indiscreet marriage."

"No—for my brother's greatest anger against Ardenne was kindled by the thought that he had treacherously sought the affections of his daughter, and married her for a speculation; he did not dream that Winny, poor child, quite innocently, did most of the love-making herself—and that Miss Hinton did the match-making. *None* of us thought that we were all misled by that poor, misguided Sina. Well, the advertisement shall be renewed to-day, and kept up until something transpires. Much do I fear, however, that Ardenne has perished in the Western wilds."

"And then, mother, Winny, what a desolate, poor child! When I am gone, mother, keep her in your heart and home as your own daughter. She, poor one, needs a mother—even as you will then need a daughter. Comfort her, mother, and you shall be comforted."

Mrs. Summerfield's tears flowed again, and were again stayed, and resolutely wiped away.

"And, mother, the disposition of my wealth; you, so richly jointured, do not need it; nevertheless, you must have half. Of the other half it will take but a very small portion to dress a bride of Heaven—and the bulk I will make over to Edgar Ardenne. That will make him independent of his father-in-law, as it is best for him that he should be; and Winny will be better pleased than if I gave the money to herself. If Ardenne returns, mother, persuade them both to live with you. Let them be your children—get interested in *their* children. For you and I, mother—we shall meet in Heaven."

Mrs. Summerfield promised every thing her daughter wished. She would have promised any thing then.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

THE SURPRISE.

Sunrise will come next!
The shadow of the night is passed away!
——— Here begins your true career.
Look up to it! All now is possible—
The glory and the grandeur of each dream,
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled.—*Browning's Luria.*

THIS was Easter Monday, be it remembered—and about ten o'clock in the day, when Miss Summerfield sat in the parlor awaiting the arrival of the young priest. It was the front parlor on the left hand of the hall, and whose tall, front windows commanded a view of the grove-dappled and rolling lawn, which heaved in green waves down to the river—of the encircling river with its tree-fringed banks, and of the blue chain of lofty mountains shutting in the whole scene.

A servant entered, and placing a card in Miss Summerfield's hand, retired. She read it indolently, without at first taking in its meaning. She looked at it again, and grew pale as she read the name engraved on it, aloud—"MONS. LE DUC DE VELLEMONTE. What does this mean?" She looked up, and Claude Vellemonte stood before her; or, was this indeed the young priest of St. Joseph's? No! for the priestly garb was gone—and this gentleman wore a quiet citizen's dress of speckless black—and yet, indeed, it was Claude Vellemonte, and not another, who, advancing, now, and replying to her question, began to say:

"It means, my dear Imogene—"

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But before he went any further, he sat down on the sofa beside her, passed his arm around her waist, and drawing her head upon his bosom, bent and pressed his lips to hers in the very first, virgin kiss he had ever given woman, or she had ever received from man! It was a life-giving kiss to both; and he gazed down in her radiant eyes with a smile of pure ecstatic joy, lighting another smile in her face, such as only children or angels wear.

And she! Was she shocked, alarmed—was she even surprised at this sudden, this unprecedented joy—or, *was* it unprecedented? No! for even thus they had often met in the spiritual land, in dreams, that seemed as real as this. No! It seemed so right, so natural, or rather, every thought and emotion was swallowed up in a feeling of measureless content, as she lay there in the pure arms of her spotless, her almost divine lover—as she lay there, lost in a trance of joy. Not one word of explanation had been spoken—yet she was so naturally, so inexpressibly happy! While Claude gazed down upon her, his radiant eyes showering blessings, and more divinely blessed himself in the sense of giving than of receiving happiness. At last he murmured lowly under his breath:

"You beautiful and happy child! Oh, to hold you thus! It is even more of Heaven than my visions promised—to have your head lying here, where in dreams only it has ever laid. Ah, rest your head here, on my bosom, where it has so long ached to rest; where I have so much longed to have it! You darling, you good, you beautiful, happy child!"

"Ah, Claude, my heart must break with its excess of love for God and you!"

"Oh, Imogene, my soul's bride for so long! My spirit-bride! My dream-bride, embodied at last, and on my bosom! My dream-bride."

"My dream-lover!"

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"My measureless content! Oh, Imogene! Imogene!" he murmured, hovering over her lips again, lighting softly on them.

"You thought of me all this time! You loved me all this time—and, Claude, I always knew it!"

"Always! Always! Imogene, I was with you in my dreams! By day, I would conscientiously dismiss you—but 'sleep has its own world,' governed by its own laws—there I ever found you again."

"You were ever with me in your dreams?"

"Ever—ever, Imogene!"

"I knew and felt it! My days were wretched; but my nights were unutterably happy!"

"My beautiful embodied dream! My happy dream embodied, and in my arms! Why, Imogene, you are so real, I cannot realize you! Long glossy purple locks, majestic brow, and glorious eyes and lips! Ah, my beautiful dream-bride, I shall never, never, never wake up again and lose you!" and stooping, his lips grew to hers again.

"Mr. Vellemonte!!! *Father* Vellemonte!!!! I am SHOCKED, ASTOUNDED!" exclaimed the voice of Mrs. Summerfield, who at this critical moment appeared, and was struck still in the door, like a statue of horrified astonishment in its niche. "Mr. Vellemonte, *Father* Vellemonte, I say, you horrify me beyond measure! In the Virgin's name, what dreadful sacrilege is this?"

They do not see or hear her—for

> "Heedless as the dead are they
> Of aught around, above, beneath;
> As if all else had passed away—
> They only for each other breathe."

"*Mr. Vellemonte!* FATHER *Vellemonte!* Do you wish to KILL me, then?"

"Oh! my dream-bride! my beautiful embodied spirit-bride!" murmured the entranced man, straining her again

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and again to his bosom, and pressing fervent kisses on her brow and eyes and lips, in the very ecstacy of rapture.

"My God, I shall presently madden! Imogene, my daughter! MISS SUMMERFIELD!" exclaimed the deeply scandalized lady, in the extremity of distress.

"Ah, Claude, my archangel, when did I die? I do not remember—when came I to Heaven, Claude?" sighed Imogene, quite lost in a trance of joy.

"FATHER VELLEMONTE, release my daughter this moment!" exclaimed the lady, flying toward them.

Claude now looked up—did he drop Imogene? No, indeed. Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, he would not have dropped her then. He took time to kiss her again, and gather her closer to his bosom, before he answered, entirely at random, an observation whose *sound* he had only heard

"Yes, madam, certainly."

"You shameless man," cried the excited lady in a choking voice.

A sense of the absurdity of the whole thing now struck Claude, who, with the first inclination for humor that had visited him for many a day, now arose, and setting Imogene on her feet, presented her to her mother, and said:

"Mrs. Summerfield, let me crave your congratulations for my betrothed wife—Madame La Duchesse de Vellemonte."

The lady had been very red before, she now grew deadly white; a look of unutterable sorrow chased every expression of anger from her face, and gazing on them both with profound pity, she said, in a voice full of grief:

"Ah, my God, *I see it all now!* God knows that they have both gone mad."

Smitten with compunction for the pain he had given her, Claude Vellemonte took her hand in the most respectful manner, and said:

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"Mrs. Summerfield—mother—my honored mother, I am neither mad nor guilty, nor is your daughter, whose faith in me, was to her—*knowledge*. What I say to you, only requires your consent and blessing to make it truth. You knew before that I was the son of the banished Duke de Vellemonte, who, during the Reign of Terror, became a refugee in this country, and died at St. Joseph's; you know that I obeyed his dying will rather than followed my own vocation, in entering the priesthood; you know he chose this life for me because he thought the patrimonial title and estate forever gone; and because his last days were characterized by extreme religious devotion. Three years ago I found that I loved Imogene too well to make a good priest. I struggled desperately with this feeling, until I discovered that Imogene loved me. I struggled with it then no longer; but, as I was yet scarcely entered upon my clerical duties, I wrote to Rome a history of the whole matter, praying our most holy father a dispensation from my vows, but leaving my destiny entirely in his hands, expressing the fullest disposition to resign myself to his will. While I was making this appeal from America, some of my father's old friends, who had gained the high favor of the emperor, remembered the exiled son of their banished friend, and exerted their interest for me. The end of both their intercession and my petition was, that six weeks ago two packets arrived for me, one from Paris, containing dispatches that reinvested me with my late father's title and estates, and recalled me to Paris; and the other, comprising a dispensation from priestly vows—that dispensation to take effect after vesper hour on Easter Sunday evening."

Then, turning to Miss Summerfield, he said:

"Imogene, my child, did I anticipate the date of this dispensation by an hour? Did I not faithfully pay the uttermost farthing of my duty, even in the trial of hearing thy enforced and expiatory confession? Did I ever, by word or

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look, offend thee? I heard thy confession, Imogene, because, my child, my approaching dispensation did not wipe from thy soul the sin of sacrilege you committed in loving a priest, and because that penance was laid upon thee by thy Father Confessor, and obedience to thy spiritual guide was necessary. When I absolved thee of thy sin, Imogene, I could not assure to thee a compensation for thy sufferings, for that would have *then* been a breach of the vows which bound me until evening. But when I saw thee so meekly resigned to give up all the pleasures of the earth, and in the seclusion of the convent expiate thy error by devoting thyself to God, I could and did say in the words of Christ, 'Verily I say unto thee that no man hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in THIS TIME—houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come, eternal life.' But oh, thou faithless and despairing child, thou didst not bind it to thy bleeding heart. It was *my* faith, my Imogene, that saved thee. Ah, Imogene's mother! I *have* a vocation for the priesthood. Heaven doth truly know I have—but not for its necessary celibacy. I have too large a human heart for that; and had this great tide of natural affections been turned back upon my heart, it would have become a burning and consuming fire, that would have dried up all the milk of human kindness in my nature; all the blood in my veins; all the flesh on my bones; and this fine, vital temperament of mine, that enables me to do so-much for others more feeble, would have changed. In body, I should have grown billious, sallow, thin, and leathery; and the ruin of mind and soul would have been still greater. I should have become bigoted, fanatical, ascetic, harsh, given to persecution. Those few cruel priests whom history records as standing reproaches to the holy mother

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church, were conscientious men, of ardent temperaments, whose strong natural affections, turned back from their natural course upon the heart and brain, became furious fires, exciting them to deeds of cruelty; for such men must LIVE, must feel their LIFE, if not in human love, why then in human, or rather in fiendish hates, and in the excitement that scenes of blood afford. History has dealt too severely with them, because philosophy has not revealed them. No, Mrs. Summerfield, all men are not fit for the priesthood, nor all women for the cloister, who rashly enter the one or the other. I said I had a vocation for the priesthood, but not for the celibacy. Understand me. The *secular* duties of the priesthood, and of the Sisters of Mercy, are incumbent upon every son and daughter of God on earth. The ministry to the sick, the poor, sinful, and the prisoner, are some of them; for these I have a special mission, and am especially endowed; for no amount of sin, disease, or suffering, has power to disturb my health, cheerfulness, faith, or hope; therefore I can impart from the fullness of these blessings to those who have need; and therefore, these secular duties of the priesthood, while I live, will I perform in obedience to the text—'Freely have ye received—freely give.'"

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CHAPTER XLV.

WINNY.

Courage!—you travel through a darksome cave,
But still as nearer to the light you draw,
Fresh gales will meet you from the upper air,
And wholesome dews of heaven your forehead lave,
And darkness lighten more, till full of awe,
You stand in the open sunshine, unaware.—*R. C. French.*

WINNY ARDENNE! Have you lost sight of that gentle sufferer, reader? Is she forgotten, because, in the noise of violent and conflicting passions, and the shock of sudden and tragic events, the still music of her gentle life is unheard? She is not forgotten by any one near her. Mrs. Summerfield, amid her heavy domestic trials, and Imogene, in her suffering, had still found room in their hearts for Winny. The old lady, who, now that her affections were satisfied with the presence of her "baby," had fallen into that still, smiling, blissful dotage, beautifully termed "second childhood," that state which is neither quite of earth nor quite of heaven, but seems a happy lingering of the soul between both—that loving, lovely close of a long and good earthly career, which is not death, but an easy, gentle translation of the soul to God—the old lady was Winny's constant companion. Those three children, I mean grandmother, Winny, and baby, occupied one room at Red-Stone, and Gelly waited on them. Claude Vellemonte often came to visit and cheer them. In Winny, indeed, he found a special object for his life-giving mission, and he devoted himself to her with all his cheerful and hearty faith, hope,

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and charity. Perhaps no one in the world besides Claude Vellemonte, could have "ministered" so successfully to this heart and "mind diseased." He had awakened Winny's dormant religious affections, strengthened her faith, and revived her hopes; and with that great hygeian genius, whose possession had acquired for him, among his more simple-minded parishioners, the reputation of miraculous power, he had even very much improved her physical health.

"Hydropathy and Mesmerism—the two great ministers of health, happiness and life—were divinely prefigured in the religious ordinance of baptism, and the laying-on of hands," said a divinely-inspired man, himself "an example of his own fair creed."

When Claude Vellemonte had succeeded in scattering that burning spot in Winny's breast, left by the old wound —when he had raised her spirits, and she was no longer suffering from pain, or "numbed" by despair, he told her that she must return to her father's house, and take her station daily by his sick bed; and Winny, who ever obeyed his voice, as though her Saviour had spoken by his lips, got into a carriage with her grandmother and her baby, and made old Nerve "burst out a-crying" with joy by getting out of it at the door of Oak Grove Hall. Claude Vellemonte had more than one good reason for directing this move; to explain which, I must go back a little.

It had not been deemed safe by his physicians to inform Squire Darling of the fate of Sina for some weeks, although for many reasons, known only to himself. he seemed darkly to suspect it. When at last the manner of her death was made known to him, he received the news very quietly, merely saying to himself—"Yes—yes—yes—yes—insanity was hereditary in one branch of her mother's family—her uncle died in the lunatic asylum, and one of her aunts died of a brain fever." Then he turned his face to the wall,

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and spoke no more for hours. All that day and night he refused both food and drink, and from that time he sank into deep gloom.

"Shall I never, never be happy again?" said the miserable man, as he tossed and tumbled about among the bedclothes and pillows.

Old Nerve, who was sitting comfortably in a large, soft arm-chair before the fire, in her capacity of nurse, and occupying herself with toasting her fat feet, and looking at the pictures in a splendidly bound Bible—a copy utterly forbidden to vulgar fingers, on account of its splendor—now turned her head, and took a long, exceedingly self-complacent look at her master.

"Shall I never, never see another happy day?" groaned the now feverish and excited man.

"*Never, sar!* never! sartain as you're a libin' sinner, 'till you 'solves that farm, as I telled you 'fore; 'till you 'solves that farm o' Debil, Darlin' & Compiny. The 'Compiny' o' the farm is gone, praised be my blessed 'Deemer; and that ought for to be a warnin' to you."

"Who spoke to you, you in—" faltered the squire, checking, for the first time in his life, a profane word upon his tongue.

"Nobody didn't sar, chile, but the spirit o' the Lord; an' 'Woe is me if I preaches not the Gospel.' Can't help of it, marster, chile, ef you does git mad—can't, indeed, honey—'case I talks to you fur your own good, an' I tells you again, you won't never be happy on this blessed fruitful yeth 'til you breaks long o' Sam, an' sets out to serve your 'vine marster and Lord, as any ole gemlum as has come to your time o' life ought for to do."

"Oh, oh, oh," groaned the poor man, tossing about his arms.

"Yes honey! I hopes you's groanin' for your sins—'deed I does."

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"Oh! oh! oh!"

"Yes, chile, that's right! I hopes you's 'siderin' now how you's made other people groan—'deed I does, chile!"

"You infernal—oh! oh!"

"Ah, Lord, see that, now! when I'm a prophesying of the Bible to him for his own good; but that's always the way Sam's children talks to the Lord's little ones!—ef he had the power this blessed minute, he'd heave somethin' at my poor ole head, and split me down; but, praised be my blessed Marster, he ain't got the power; he done stretch out there, an' 'blige for to hear the truffe now, ef he turned a def year to it all his life *before*. An' I gwine give it to him good," said Nerve, in a tone of determination, being—in the full knowledge that her master was entirely in her power—wonderfully strengthened to preach the Gospel. "Don't you know, you poor ole sinner, as he who 'fends one of the Lord's little ones, had better have a maelstrome strung around his neck, and be hanged to the top o' the trees? an' ain't *I* one o' the Lord's little ones as you're 'fendin' of? Ain't this here parsecution?"

Here a pillow was launched at her head from the hands of the enraged squire, who instantly fell back, exhausted with the effort. Nerve tossed up the whites of her eyes, and, crossing herself devoutly, ejaculated:

"Oh, may the Lord 'give this poor ole forsook sinner, and lead him to 'pentance, and not cut him off in his sins. *I* 'gives you, ole marster, chile, 'deed I does; I 'gives you, an' I *pities* of you; an' I heaps coals o' fire on your head!"

"Oh! oh! oh!"

"They burns, does they?"

"You'll *kill* me!"

"No, I won't, honey; I *pities* of you; 'deed I does, chile, an' I takes all your deblish ways in good part!"

"*Do*, oh, *do* hush,—oh! talking—"

"I can't, chile; I can't, indeed, honey! I'm a talkin' to

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you for your own good; 'deed, 'fore my 'vine Marster, I am, chile. I'm a settin' of your sins afore you. This is the *fuss* chance as ever I had, in all my life, o' doin' of it, an' it may be the *las'*, so I gwine to 'prove it, an' give it to you *good*—'deed I is, chile!"

"I'll—oh! oh! *I'll*—" groaned the highly-feverish man, tossing about wildly among the sheets, and grasping crazily at the pillows.

"Well, *do*, honey! Yes, ole marster, do heave the other pillow at my head; *do*, chile, ef it eases of your poor ole conscience any; an' the bolsters, too, honey; an' the counterpane, an' the sheets, chile, ef it makes you feel any better 'bout the heart; though, ef it don't, 'haps you'd better not tire of yourself."

"Oh! oh! I shall—I shall—*go distracted!*" cried the sick man, with the rising strength of fever.

"Yes, ole marster, honey, you may kick and stram (plunge, struggle) as much as you please, an' fling your arms an' legs about in that ondecent manner, as no gemman ought for to do afore a lady, but you can't get out'n that bed to do nobody no harm, praised be my blessed Lord, so you's got for to have your sins set afore you *good*—'deed you has, honey! I ain't a gwine fur to tell you how you stormed, and ruv, and druv your 'spectable old mother in a paralyplectic stroke, and how you hev the and-iron at my head, 'cause all that's writ down in the Lord's 'count book 'gin you; an' I ain't a gwine to say a singly word 'bout your runnin' arter Marse Edgar like a tearin' mad bull to gore him through the body, an' 'bout your heavin' of a sword at Miss Winny, the blessed baby! an' a smashin' of her innocen' little breas'."

"My God! oh, who will deliver me!"

"Yes, marster, chile, groan, honey; it's good for your poor 'mortal soul: groan for your ondutiful behavement to your own dear chile, as you mortally wounded fuss, an' then starved an' friz' into a 'sumption, an' then tore away from

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her husban' an' broke her heart! Ah, my Lor', I wonder what her mother, Miss Angelly, up in Heaven, thought when she looked down from Heaven an' saw how you were sarvin' of her orphan gal—"

"Oh! oh! for God's sake—Winny!" cried the tortured sufferer, beginning to wander in his mind.

"No, I'se not a gwine to say anythin' 'bout *that*, 'cause that's writ down underneath of the other. An' I ain't a gwine to say nothin' 'bout your takin' to drink, an' fetchin' a 'grace on your colored people, till we wur all 'shame' to tell anybody who we 'longed to!"

"Winny! Winny! my child! my child! *put her out!*" raved the tormented man, floundering violently.

"No more ain't I a 'gwine for to say 'nothin 'bout your kickin' of poor ole Kill down-stairs, cause everybody knows how Sam made you do *that*, and blessed be my 'vine Saviour, it didn't kill him; 'sides which, when you sarved my dear ole angel so, it seemed like a pilin' up of your measur' of wickedness, for the Lord didn't let you do a singly thing else, but guv you right to de debil, an' *here you is, you see.*"

"Winny, my child! I—*I'm burning up!*"

"Is your pillows hot? Ah, marster, chile, they isn't half as hot as you know where is?"

"*Oh! oh! I'm in flames, and a fiend torments me!*"

"Now, sure as he is a livin' sinner, he thinks as he is in *that there*, and that I'm what's his name! See the 'fects o' a guilty conscience; but he knows what I'm sayin' of well enough. Hem! hem! but marster, honey, what I's bound for to set 'fore you in its proper cullers is *this here:* your ondutiful behavement to your own dear chile. Jes' now you was a makin' of a great 'mount 'bout your not being happy—how can you 'spect to be happy when you've done hev all your happ'ness away? The Lord give you plenty o' happ'ness, an' you hev it all ont'n doors; an' now you

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talk 'bout doin' happy as if you 'served to, an' as if you thought your 'vine Marster an' Lord (so Nerve was very fond of giving *her* master a master in his turn,) hadn't no other sarvints to 'vide for 'sides you, an' hadn't nothin' else to 'tend to but bakin' o' frosted cakes o' happ'ness, an' sendin' of 'em down on waiters for you to heave out'n the windy! Lord! how happy you 'serves for to be, anyhow!—Ole marster, I say, listen to me now, an' stop a kickin' about in that ungemmanly manner; it's rale ondecent, 'sides which, it'll tear the sheets, so it take me a week for to mend them, 'cause, you know, I ain't as young as I use for to be, no more an' you, though praised be my heavenly Lord I thinks I'se led a more 'spectable life—Listen to me now, fur I am 'bout to tell you a piece of righteous, Gospel truffe; an' you must hear to it—an' not leave it be a heavin' of pearls afore swine! Listen then! You 'pends upon your 'vine Lord to make *you* happy—other people 'pends upon *you* to make *them* happy. Now this is Gospel: *You won't never be no happier yourself till you tries for to make them as 'pends on you for happiness, happy!* 'fore my blessed heavenly Judge won't you, if it wur the last word I had to speak on the yeth! An them as 'pends 'tirely 'pon you for happ'ness is no strangers an' ailings (aliens), but your own dear heart's chile, Miss Winny, an' that there poor motherless boy, Marse Edgar as you druv off in the dead o' winter to the Devil's Icy Peak—or some place; an' now what you has got to do, if you wants your poor ole sinful soul save', is this here: 'jes sen' for Marse Edgar back from out yonder an' giv' him a lif' in the world, as an' hones' daddy-in-law as has broke 'long o' Sam' un' set out for to sarve his 'vine Marster in his ole days, ought for to do. 'Deed I think I'se a 'xample to you! It hurted *my* heart when the gal I fotched up, fotch a 'grace on wedem by heavin' of herself away on a poor white man's son; but see what I does! Why, I sez, 'what's done can't be ondone,' an' I 'gives the poor motherless

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boy, 'cause he loved my baby anyhow, an' my baby's heart was wrapt up in him. An,' 'deed, I never *did* think myself so very much 'bove the young man, as a person might s'pose; an' ef he wur for to come back an' 'have himself as he ought for to do, I'd give him all the 'conragement in my power. Sure we are all poor creeturs, an' ekel in the sight o' the Marster; an' so if he comes back an' haves himself, I don't care what any body says, I'll 'courage the young man."

"Ar-r-r-r-r-h! ar-r-r-r-r-h!! ar-r-r-r-r-h!!! he's a murderin' of me! Ar-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!!!!" yelled old Nerve, in the strong grasp of the fever-maddened man, who with the new and terrible strength of delirium, had suddenly sprung from his bed, dragging the sheets behind him, and seized his tormentor by the nape of her neck. "Ah-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!!!!" yelled Nerve, once more extricating herself an instant from his strangling fingers. "Oh, praised be my 'vine Marster, Mr. Vellemonte! is you comed at last," exclaimed she, running for shelter into the arms of Claude Vellemonte, who had just then hurried into the room at the sound of shrieks; "he's! he's got 'larum-terrors! (delirium-tremens;) he's got 'larum-terrors! he's got 'larum-terrors, as use for to follow of him when he was a drinkin' man—as sure as he's a livin' sinner, he's got 'larum-terrors!"

"Has he been taking any alcoholic spirits?" asked Claude Vellemonte, when he had succeeded in getting him back to bed, and composing him.

"Sir?"

"Has he been drinking?"

"Oh, Lor'! *no, sur;* not a drap—no, sur! On'y I was a settin' of his duty afore him, and he hev himself into a passion 'long o' me, an' fotch on this here."

"What were you doing?"

"A-settin' of his sins afore him, an' a-prophesyin' o' the Bible to him—as a faithful sarvint aught for to do."

"And you raised his fever and frenzied him. Nerve, do you want to kill your master?"

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"*Me*, kill him! Lor' forgive you, Mr. Vellemonte! Why, I'm the bes' frien' he's got in the worl', an' the truest! War'n't we two fotch up together like brother an' sister—me an' ole marster? *Me*, want to kill him!"

"But you will certainly kill him, if you worry him so."

"I was a preachin' of the Gospel to him, sur!"

"But—as I have warned you before—you have no mission, no vocation, for that work."

"Sur!"

"No *nack*, then."

"Yes, sar—yes—*wocation*—yes, that's the most genteelest word; *nack* is rale, down low, poor, white people's talk; wo—what's it, marster?"

"Vocation."

"Wocation. Yes, thanky, sir! yes—I'll rememberize it!"

"You must remember also, not rashly to handle holy things, as you do. Nerve, you are a well-meaning woman, if we except a slight vein of sly malice; and a sensible one, barring an overweening self-esteem; but you have certainly, nearly killed your master to-day by preaching out of time and place. 'There is a time for all things,' said the wise man; and the truth is to be spoken '*in love*,' said the apostle."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, if you will promise never more to speak until I give you leave, I will, on my side, promise, that before the year is out, you and Kill shall be free, with a little house, well-furnished, and a little plot of ground, with a horse, a cow, pigs, and some poultry."

The result of this affair was, that Claude Vellemonte, on returning to Red-Stone Hall, had first sent Winny, now somewhat recovered, to Oak Grove; and then going to Sacred Heart, had dispatched Harriette Joy as general protector.

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But Claude Vellemonte had more than one motive for sending Winny to her father, for though it was certain that the feeble one could do nothing in the way of nursing him, or even sit by his bedside for any great length of time together, yet her attendance there was a duty, and her mere presence had a salutary effect upon the health of the invalid, and exercised a softening and redeeming influence upon the heart of the father. We know that when he first saw Winny after her illness his heart had melted, and his tears had fallen at the sight of his suffering child; that he might then have been led to repent his harshness, had his thoughts not soon been monopolized by the corroding jealousies and anxieties of his absorbing passion for Sina; and his judgment been unduly influenced by that wily girl, who knew, even amid their fierce quarrels, how to turn his anger against Edgar Ardenne, whom she ever artfully presented to him as a heartless adventurer, who had speculated upon his daughter's affections and his own wealth and influence. And our honest squire, who had less keenness of perception than violence of temper and stubbornness of will, continued to act upon that view of the case up to the time of the catastrophe. But now, under the influence of the discipline of Sina Hinton's awful death, and his own prolonged illness, could he lay there on his bed of slow convalescence, and not be led to deep reflection on the past, or could he turn his eyes to where his daughter sat in her arm-chair by his bedside, and see his pale, suffering, but uncomplaining child, heart-broken by his own harshness, and not wish to bind up that broken heart, and if possible, to give it happiness?

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CHAPTER XLVI.

THE MAIDEN'S INTERCESSION.

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
Upon the place beneath: It is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes;
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.

* * * * * *

Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: We do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.—*Shakspeare.*

How quiet it was in the sick-room on Easter Tuesday morning. A small, bright fire was burning in the grate at the same time that—for the weather was dry, clear, and pleasant—the windows were slightly raised, and the blinds partly open to let in the fresh and "sunny air." They had done breakfast, and the room was made very tidy and cheerful; and the now rapidly recovering invalid, newly shaved and refreshed, sat in bed propped up with pillows. The old lady, placidly smiling to herself, reposed in an easy chair by the fire; while Winny sat by her father's bedside, with her baby sleeping on her lap, as though she had forgotten to lay it down. She was looking at her baby in a pensive, half-abstracted manner. She was silent, patient, and serene as ever. She had fallen into one of her reveries, and did not know that her father's eyes, full of mournful affection, were gazing on her. Her thoughts were far away. He leaned over, and supporting his head upon his hand, while

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he rested on his elbow, stretched his other hand out, and laying it affectionately on her pale, golden hair, said:

"Winny, my child!"

She looked up.

"What are you thinking of, my dear child?"

She dropped her eyelids, and two large tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

"Winny, my child, have you ever heard from Edgar since he went away?"

Now the tears streamed.

"Say, Winny. I have a reason for asking you, my love."

A suffocating sob of—

"No—never—never once," was the almost unintelligible answer.

"Did you love him so dearly then, Winny?"

Her sobs grew now hysterical. She leaned her face down upon the side of the bed.

"Don't cry, Winny, my dear; don't cry."

But Winny sobbed the more.

"Don't cry, Winny, don't! Affairs are not so desperate as you think, maybe, child. Don't cry so much!"

"Father—let me—it is the first time—I've shed a tear—since he went away! You called him 'Edgar'—*kindly*—and that—that—touched my heart—and—and—let me cry!" sobbed Winny, convulsively, while the poor father, who could not guess the good this great thaw of congealed tears was doing her, fretted and fumed. As soon as Winny could speak, she commenced again, and between broken sobs, said:

"Father, forgive—not *him*, for he was not to blame, but—*me*, for it wes my fault! I loved him so much, so much, so much, father! Father, forgive me; bless and dismiss me, that I may go and seek him."

"Seek him, poor child! Do you know where he is?"

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"No, father, but God will lead me to him."

"*You!* you, poor, thin, pale thing, that pant when you come up-stairs!"

"God will strengthen me, father. Give me your blessing and let me go."

"Wouldn't it be better to bring Edgar back here?"

"Ah! father, if you would—if you would—you would make me so, *so* happy! But oh, father, how will you find out where he is?"

"I know where he is!"

"You, father! you know where he is! Oh! father, if you do indeed, for the blessed loving Saviour's sake, tell me! tell me!"

"He is in the wilds of the North-West Territory, living a hunter's life."

"And you will bring him back? Oh, father, you will make your only child happy! You will bring him back?"

"I do not know, my child, just yet. I'll see," replied the squire, who found magnanimity a new and exceedingly difficult lesson to practice.

"Oh, father, you have my life and death in your hands—give me life!"

"Winny, my child, hope all things. This I will tell you for your comfort. I took you from Pine Cliffs, and permitted Edgar Ardenne to leave the State, broken-hearted, because I was justly incensed against you both, and wished to punish you both, as well as to try *him*—to test his fidelity and integrity. I wasn't sure he was altogether evil. Though I disliked him so much, that I cared not the toss-up of a penny whether he *stood* the test or not; yet, in the event of his standing it, I was fully determined to bring him back to you. I was compelled to be silent as the grave about it, and even act a malignity I did not always feel, in order to blind people to my thoughts, and give my test a fair chance to work. Well, I never lost sight (morally speaking) of

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Edgar Ardenne for one hour after he left here, or for one hour since. You know who left in his company ?"

"No, sir."

"Willie Smilie, Hettie's cousin. And I wrote to him, and have been in secret correspondence with him ever since."

"Oh, father !"

"It is absolutely necessary, my dear. A penniless man who carries off an heiress is an object of suspicion, and must be submitted to a severe test before confidence may be safely reposed in him. Well, I am happy for your sake, Winny, to say that *he* has stood the test—he has been true even to the severe condition that obliged him not to seek a reunion with you."

"Father, father ! *you* compelled him to make that promise ?"

"Yes ! and *then* I was in earnest—my more merciful thought was an after-thought. Well, Winny, he has stood the severe test, and so, as the devil himself can't unmake him your husband, the father of my grandchild, and my own son-in-law—perhaps—mind, I say *perhaps*—I'll some day write for him to come home."

"And I, father, will never cease to pray you to do so until I see my prayers of no avail, and then, with my baby in my arms, I will go and seek him."

While this scene was taking place above stairs, another was transpiring below. "Monsieur Le Duc de Vellemonte" had ridden over to Oak Grove, and asked for Harriette Joy, who still remained there as a temporary acting mistress of the house. The news of his change of circumstances had preceded him in a note carried by a messenger from Red-Stone, who, every morning, was dispatched to inquire after the squire's amendment.

Claude de Vellemonte was closeted with Harriette Joy,

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and his manner was very serious and her eyes were red with weeping. He had been confiding to her Sina's whole secret history. Whe he had finished, he said:

"And now, knowing that when we had supposed him to be getting well, the news of Miss Hinton's fate threw him back so dangerously, I have been, up to this time, fearful of opening up the subject to Squire Darling again; fraught with so much pain as the story of her perfidy must be. Still, in justice and in mercy to Winny and Edgar Ardenne, he ought very quickly to know how those children were betrayed into marriage by another's artful misrepresentations."

"You may tell him with safety now, I think; at least it is not *right* longer to delay," said Harriette, wiping her eyes; and resuming her cheerfulness. "I will go up and inform him that you are here."

And she went.

"Yes," said Squire Darling, "let him come in!" and soon after, Claude entered the sick chamber.

"I suppose I may be permitted to congratulate you upon the happy change in your circumstances, Monsieur Le Duc de Vellemonte," said the squire, gruffly, in the tone of—"I s'pose you think yourself a very important personage—who the d—l gave you leave to be any happier than any body else?"

"Thank you, squire. Wish me joy of a happier coming event—my approaching union with your niece, Miss Summerfield."

"Ah, indeed! When is that to come off?"

"Our marriage is delayed by circumstances over which you yourself have the greatest control. Your own restoration to health, and—pardon me—the reunion of Winny and Edgar Ardenne."

"Father Vellemonte! I beg your forgiveness, Monsieur

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Le Duc—I am not—because I happen to have been ill—grown feeble as a child, to be tutored by all around me," said the squire, in an irritated tone; for like all other rather weak-minded persons, he was very much afraid of having it supposed that he could be influenced.

"I do not presume to wish to tutor you, my good sir; I have only certain revelations to make that will throw a new light upon that affair of the elopement."

"Revelations! Humph! it seems to me that you have become a book of revelations."

"Are you strong enough to hear a somewhat tedious story?"

"Don't know, indeed, Father Vellemonte—beg your pardon, Monsieur Le Duc."

"I will make it short as possible, then," said Claude, with unruffled serenity, and forthwith commenced giving him the whole history of the runaway match.

Squire Darling listened with unusual self-command, only ejaculating "Humph!" and "Ah!" at certain points. He showed not much pain at the discovery of Miss Hinton's perfidy: for, in reality, his quondam passion for Sina was of that nature which required the presence of its object to excite it; and now, between the loss of her presence and his own illness, it became to him only as the memory of a severe fever. He listened to this secret history with some degree of satisfaction. He began to feel a wish, and, indeed, a positive necessity of recalling Ardenne, and he wanted very much a plausible excuse for relenting. A feeling more lively than this mere satisfaction, an emotion of generous regret, and a wish to compensate the boy and girl he had so deeply injured, crossed his mind, and impelled him to exclaim:

"By Heaven, there are not reams of paper enough in all Jefferson County for me to write to Edgar on!" but instantly, angry with himself for this escapade, he relapsed into more

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than usual sullenness of silence, and heard the story to an end with a solitary "Humph!" at its conclusion. Then, when, after silently awaiting his comments for awhile, Claude ventured to inquire concerning his probable course of action, he said, importantly:

"This matter requires mature deliberation, Father Vellemonte—I beg your pardon, Monsieur Le Duc."

I am afraid, reader, you do not do half justice to the goodness that dwelt in Harriette Joy's merry heart. She was waiting on the steps for Claude when he came down.

"And so you could get nothing out of him?" she said, when Claude had told her the result of his visit.

"He takes time for mature deliberation."

"Yes; a judge taking time for mature deliberation as to whether he will pardon or not, and when, and how far, while the culprits are bound upon the rack. This must be put a stop to. I will go myself and talk to him. He is fond of me. I will go and coax him."

"Do not go, my dear Harriette, to-day; he is too much excited, and I am afraid of a return of fever, therefore I left him so suddenly. Go to-morrow morning, my dear child," said Charles Vellemonte, squeezing Harriette's hand and leaving her.

"I will go up and stay with your father, Winny, dear, while you and grandmother (Harry, since coming to the house, had always affectionately called the old lady grandmother) eat breakfast," said Harriette the next morning, and accordingly she ran up-stairs and entered the squire's room. He was up now, and seated in a crimson damask arm-chair by the fire. He was dressed in a blue velvet dressing-gown, and a many-colored Chinese night-cap. And by his side stood a nice little mahogany stand, covered with a white cloth, and an elegant little breakfast

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service for one person. Nerve was standing waiting on him.

"Will you take some breakfast, Miss Harry?" cheerfully inquired the squire.

"Indeed, I'm afraid there's not enough for yourself," laughed Harriette.

"I do not, in fact, know that there will be enough for *two*, since the second is little Nimrod; indeed, I half repent my invitation—say 'No, thank you,' Miss Harry."

"No, thank you, sir; I came up only to wait on you. Nerve, go down and nurse the baby."

"Nuss the baby! I think it's 'bout time I'd a done o' that there," said Nerve, grumbling, but obeying.

Harriette had chosen her time well—when, refreshed by a good night's sleep and by his bath, Squire Darling, "newly shaved—fresh as a bridegroom," sat in his handsome dressing-gown and cap, in his large easy-chair, by the genial bright fire, enjoying all the creature comforts with the infinite, the inevitable gusto of a convalescent. Harry went at her innocent flattering with little tact. She buttered his buckwheats for him, kept alive the fire in the chafing-dish under his venison-steak, and cut off the choice pieces and laid on his plate. And finally, after he had eaten and lingered long over a very hearty breakfast, she lighted his meerschaum and handed it to him, rolling away the stand at the same time. *But then* Harry, the transparent little hypocrite, sat down on a low stool close by his side, and leaning her elbows on the arm of his chair, rested her chin upon the palms of both hands, and, looking up in his face, very sweetly informed him that she loved the fragrant smoke of the meerschaum better than any perfume in the world. Ah, Miss Harry, this coaxing and flattering an old gentleman of Squire Darling's kith is not the wisest thing in the world, as you will presently find to your cost. She liked tobacco-smoke better than any thing else in the

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world! The mendacious little sinner! Squire Darling himself was not to be gulled by that very flimsy piece of deceit. He took his pipe out of his mouth, and looking down at her with an affectionate archness, said:

"God Almighty bless you, Harriette. You can no more play a part than the simplest infant."

Harriette dropped her eyelids, blushed deeply, and looked intensely mortified at the idea of being thought incapable of deceit.

"Well, what is it, Miss Harry? for, of course, all this wheedling means that you want something of me."

"Yes, I do," said Harriette, in a low tone; "but it was not for myself."

"Of course it was not; who ever heard of your ever saying, doing, or thinking any thing for yourself? God bless little Nimrod. How refreshing a good girl is," said the squire, patting her black, curly-haired head approvingly, and stroking down her damask cheek. "Now, what is it, Harriette? for, to be sure, there is a good chance of your suit being gained; there are few things I could refuse little Nimrod."

"Then I wish, if you please—I should be so thankful to you if you would—would—would not be so extremely hard-hearted and cruel to poor dear Edgar and Winny."

"'Hard-hearted and cruel!' Humph! Your manner of advocating a cause should immortalize you as a diplomatist, Miss Harry," dryly commented the squire. "Well, I s'pose that's wholesome truth, and no flattery," he added mentally; then, speaking aloud to Harriette, he said:

"Well, what am I to do?"

"Deal justly by them, sir."

"Humph! *There it is again.* No appeal to—well, it's well I'm inclined to favor her petition," thought the squire; and then he said: "And if I do, Miss Harry, what then?"

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"Oh, sir, they will be so very happy."

"And I?"

"Oh, sir, never mind about you."

"The d—l!"

"I mean, sir, that there is nothing to disturb your happiness, and that we are not anxious on the subject."

"Humph! but I should be *alone*."

"You would have the company of your daughter and son-in-law, and their child, or children, sir."

"Oh, my daughter and son-in-law, they will be absorbed in each other; and as for their child, or *children*, ain't you ashamed, Miss Harry, by the way, to be speculating upon consequences. I am not fond of babies."

"Well, sir, at least you will have—"

"I will have *nothing*," said the squire; "and the fact is, that I am not going to sacrifice myself for undutiful children."

"Oh, sir, you—"

"I WON'T. D— if I do!" exclaimed the squire, who was in one of his willful moods, and wished to torment Harriette, whose want of diplomacy had certainly contributed to raise the present perverse spirit.

"No, d— if I do!" repeated the squire.

Harriette coaxed, entreated, wrung her hands, wept.

"No, d— if I do!" was all the satisfaction she got.

Harry renewed her coaxing, entreating, and weeping. In vain.

"No, d— if I do!" was the *finale*.

"Oh, mercy," said Harriette, "I thought you had repented; I thought you were going to reform, and here you are, as wicked as ever, and swearing as hard as ever."

> "When the devil got sick, the devil a saint would be;
> When the devil got well, the devil a saint was he!"

replied the squire, laughing.

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"Oh, indeed it is too shocking to hear you, and I am going away, Squire Darling," said Harry, "more in sorrow than in anger," rising to depart.

"Come back, little Nimrod—'thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.' Come back, little girl."

"No, Squire Darling, I will not come back, you distress me too much," said Harry, deeply wounded to see one who should be a father in Israel, acting and talking with so much irreverence and profanity.

"Come back, little Nimrod; I have somewhat to say to thee concerning Edgar and Winny."

"Well, sir," said Harriette, returning.

"It seems to me, you have abandoned their cause very rashly," said the squire; who, after all, liked well to be coaxed by her.

At it Harriette went again with all her might and main.

"You say you *love* Winny, sir. Ah, you cannot! If you did, you would sacrifice any selfish feeling for her sake."

"Do *you* love Winny, little Nimrod?"

"Ah, ask Winny if I do not, sir."

"Then you would be willing to do a great deal for her sake."

"Try me, sir."

"It is in your power to make her happy!"

"How, sir?"

"By reuniting her and her husband."

"*I guessed that much*, sir, for that only would make her happy—nothing else certainly would! I mean, how is it in *my power*?"

"You can purchase their pardon."

"How, sir? I say again."

"Will you promise to do any thing I wish you to do—if I promise to pardon them and recall Edgar?"

"Yes, the Lord hears me! I will, sir," said the rash and unsuspicious girl.

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"*Any thing?*"

"Any thing on earth, sir, in the range of my power."

"*Hem!* Come closer to me, Harriette. You are a dear honest, large-hearted child! How nice it would be to have you always here, and be sure that I should not have some fine fellow walking around, and carrying you off some day, as was the case with Winny. Harriette, my dear," he said stealing his arm around her waist, and drawing her up to his side—"are you engaged?"

"Engaged! how sir?"

"To be married, I mean."

"No, sir."

"Well, then, Harriette, it most assuredly is in your power to effect a reconciliation between me and Edgar Ardenne," said he, giving her a squeeze.

"I do not comprehend you, sir," observed Harriet, in a low voice, with a rising color.

"You do, you little rogue!" giving her another squeeze.

"I want to go to breakfast, Squire Darling;" said Harriette, flushing with embarrassment between her disagreeable position and her dislike of hurting his feelings.

"So you shall, in a moment; but you promised to be mediator between me and Edgar."

"Yes—well! if you want me to give you a kiss—why as it is *you*—I'll give you *two*, if you'll only let me go now, and carry some comfort to Winny."

"Ah, Harriette, I want to marry you."

"You are making fun of me, Squire Darling," said Harriette, growing pale.

"I have too earnest and sincere an esteem for you, Harriet, to 'make fun' of you. I want you to promise yourself to me on condition of my making Edgar and Winny, whom you love, happy."

Harriette was silent.

"Come, what do you say?"

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"I say you are not in earnest, Squire Darling; and that the conversation distresses me—*extremely.*"

"Before Heaven, I am in earnest in what I am about to declare to you—namely, that you shall never draw from me a pardon for these children, until you promise to give me your hand in marriage; and that as soon as you will give me that promise, I will dictate a letter that you shall write to Edgar Ardenne, recalling him to Oak Grove! Come, will you be generous—will you be magnanimous—will you be self-sacrificing?"

"To your own children, *you* will certainly be magnanimous, sir!"

"Will I? Humph! I never professed to understand that branch of ethics; and I swear to you that I will never grant *your* petition for their pardon, until you grant *my* petition for your hand."

A profound sigh from Harriette, who dropped her head upon her bosom, was the only answer.

"And I say that the very hour you promise me your hand, I will write to Edgar. Come; what do you say to that?"

"I say, sir, that I cannot see any good reason why their happiness should depend upon your possessing my hand," said Harry looking down piteously at the threatened digits.

"What! see no reason? I'll tell you then! If Winny and Edgar are reunited, I shall be very lonesome, and need a companion; and I want you."

A deeper sigh from Harriette followed.

All this time, with his arm around her waist, he held her close to his side.

"Come, Harriette, have you never heard the old ladies say, 'It's better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave?'"

"No, sir! I never heard any body but *old gentlemen say that!*"

"But you can't deny that it is better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave."

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"Yes, I can and do, Squire Darling; for in the latter case, at least, one might be able to love their master, which would make the slavery sweet, you know; and then, sir, there is such a thing as being a *young* man's darling and an old man's *slave*, which is not only very much more horrible, but very much more likely to be the case."

"That is very severe. Pray, what is your reason for thinking so?"

"That, as a general thing, there is too much sympathy between the young to permit them to tyrannize over each other much."

"You think, then, it is impossible for a young woman really to love an elderly man well enough to marry him?"

"Nay! I do not say so; I only say it is impossible for *me*. Let us drop the conversation, Squire Darling."

"By no means, till you decide, for happiness or misery, the fate of Winny and Edgar, whom you profess to love so well."

"Oh! sir, you will not afflict me with this trial!"

"I swear to you, by every thing good, great, and sacred, that I never, never, *never* will grant you a pardon for Edgar till you have granted my suit, and that I will write it the minute you do. Come, will you have me?"

"I don't want you, Squire Darling."

"Neither do I want to forgive Edgar; but come, if you'll marry me, I'll do it."

"I WON'T!" said Harry, flinging away from him, and bouncing out of the door. She encountered Winny on her way to the nursery—Winny, pale, feeble, suffering, patient—and her heart smote her. She had the power—*she*, of giving instant happiness to that sufferer. Should she withhold it from her? After all, it would make so many other people so *very* happy, and only herself uncomfortable. With one of her sudden and generous impulses, she bounced back into Squire Darling's room, and stood before him, breathless, panting—"Squire Darling, I WILL!"

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"That's a dear girl. *When?*"

"When Edgar Ardenne is once fairly reconciled with you, and established here in the house."

"That's my generous girl! Now draw that writing-table up to me—I will write immediately to Edgar."

"Squire Darling—*stop!*"

"'*Stop*,' hey?—what? Have you receded from your promise?"

"No, sir; but before closing this agreement, it is proper for you to know—"

"Well?"

"That—that—that—"

"Well, what?"

"I used to like—like—like—"

"Somebody else better than you can ever like me. Is that it?"

"Yes, sir," murmured Harriette in a low tone.

"And that somebody else?—was—well! why don't you speak?"

"Colonel Dangerfield."

"Sink that fellow to perdition! he is certainly my evil genius! I wonder what there is about him so bedeviling? He's a vain, fickle fellow! All these young men are, Harriette—there is no constancy in any of them, till they come to my years."

"Constancy," Harriette smiled to herself.

"He flirted with you desperately, Harriette. It was very wrong—he ought not to have done it."

"We were *both* much to blame, sir; *I* even more than him—let it pass."

"Don't think of the blamed muzzle-mouthed coxcomb, Harry. I am so glad Imogene jilted him for a Duke, which was exactly the trick he would have played her for a Duchess had he had the chance. Forget him, Harry; and think of the nice time you'll have with me. Only just think of

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the *horses*, little Nimrod. You may break your neck on a different steed every day in the month."

"I do not care for horses any more," said Harriette, who was now very pale and grave.

"Don't care for horses any more! By the way, certainly —I believe you have not ridden out, or joined in a hunt since Imogene returned from school, and Dangerfield, confound him, left off riding with you?"

"No," said Harriette.

"Well, never mind! draw that writing-table up to me, and do you go and tell Winny to prepare to receive her husband, as soon as a letter can reach Fort C———, and Edgar Ardenne travel back."

Harriette obeyed, and then escaped from the room, and running to Winny's nursery, caught her to her own beating heart, and breathlessly pressed her there.

"Why, what is the matter, dearest Harriette?"

"Oh! Winny, Winny!—*be happy, Winny!*—be happy, or my heart will break; for I have bartered all my days for your happiness!" and being on the very verge of hysterics, Harry broke suddenly away, and ran to her own room to have a good cry, all alone. "It is all right," she said, "all right. It is only I that am wrong. It is all right. I see that as plain as can be. It is a social economy, that one so unconnected in the world as I am, should be disposed of for the good of others, who have fathers and husbands and children to be made happy. Miss Mattie used to gather up every thing that was of no sort of use, such as waste paper and stray straws, and put them away, saying that they would do to kindle the fire with. That was all right. So it is right that I, who am nothing but a piece of waste paper, should be used to light the fire on this domestic altar again. Pooh! am I, too, getting foolish, and talking in figures of speech? It is such a calamity, Harry, to be sure of a pleasant home like Oak Grove, with such dear daily

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companions as Edgar and Winny, the old lady and the baby, and—and—ugh!—well, yes—Squire Darling too—if he'd only get his teeth filed."

One month after this event, Claude Vellemonte and Imogene Summerfield were united by father Burleigh before the altar of the Chapel of Sacred Heart; the only witnesses being the members of the families of Red-Stone Hall and Oak Grove. It was thought most decorous, under the circumstances, to omit all the usual wedding festivities, and so the bridal party returned quietly home to Red-Stone Hall, where they soon commenced preparations for sailing to France, to which country Mrs. Summerfield promised to follow them at some future period.

When Harriette Joy returned with Squire Darling, Winny, and the old lady to Oak Grove, after witnessing the marriage, she found a letter waiting for her. It was postmarked "Winchester," and directed in a familiar hand. Harriette's head swam, and her eyes filmed over an instant, as she took it and sank into a chair to read it. When she had finished, the letter dropped from her hands, her face fell upon her palms, and quick tears trickled through her fingers. Squire Darling was watching her. Now he laid aside his paper, took up the letter, and asked:

"Harriette, what's the matter? May I read this?"

"Yes, sir, and answer it, please;" and she wiped her eyes and smiled.

Squire Darling turned the letter to read it. It was a long, long epistle, full of history, metaphysics, inner life, fascination, moral light, explanations, protestations, etc., for four closely-written and crossed foolscap pages; the object of it being to persuade Harriette Joy that Henry Lee Dangerfield, amid all the vacillations of his heart, turned at last to her, "true as the needle to the pole," and ending with an offer of his hand and heart, imploring a

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speedy answer. Squire Darling, with his spectacles on his nose, and one short, fat leg crossed over the other, leaned back in his chair and read this lengthy piece of logic, passion and metaphysics, with many a "Humph!" and "Ha!" and "Fudge!" and "Trumpery!" Then he folded up the letter and deposited it in his coat pocket, uncrossed his knees, took off his specs, and looking at Harriette, said:

"Now, do you know what the vernacular of this grandiloquence is? Just *this*, Harry, my dear. As he can't get Imogene, or—hem! he'll take *you!* Don't you see it?"

"No, sir, I don't. I think in his heart he liked me better than either of the other two!"

"Oh! ho, ho, ho, ho, ho! women were made to be fooled!"

"Well! anyhow, it does not signify *now*, sir; don't let's talk about it!"

"But I am to answer this letter?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"What must I say?"

"Tell him *I can't*, you know, and—any thing you please."

"That's a wide margin—I will."

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CHAPTER XLVII.

A FAMILY REUNION.

I cannot speak, tears so obstruct my words,
And choke me with unutterable joy.—*Otway.*

A hundred thousand welcomes! I could weep—
And I could laugh—I'm light—and heavy—WELCOME!—*Shakspeare.*

Two weeks passed agreeably enough to all the dwellers at Red-Stone Hall and Oak Grove. Monsieur and Madame de Vellemonte were yet at Red-Stone. Harriette Joy still at Oak Grove. Squire Darling, who never did any thing by halves, either in the way of falling out or of making up with a friend, had availed himself of his first strength in this fine June weather, to go on a journey to meet Edgar Ardenne, who was on his way returning from the West. Sammie Smilie was staying at Oak Grove, during the absence of the proprietor, as a sort of general supervisor of the premises, and protector of the women. Hettie Smilie, the faithful companion of Winny, in joy as in sorrow, was there also, up to her eyes in confectionary and pastry-cooking. Hettie had her own little private joys, hopes and expectations. Had not her father sworn off from drinking?—was not Willie Smilie—cousin Willie, coming home with Edgar Ardenne? and when he came, was not somebody to be married and go to housekeeping at that dear old Pine Cliffs, which was newly repaired and neatly furnished by Squire Darling? Ah! Hettie tripped about, thinking this a very bright world after all is said. Harriette Joy was to be married when they returned, but no preparations for that

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event especially were on foot. It seemed to have been tacitly arranged that her wedding should come off quietly, and her position in the household be that of an upper housekeeper. And Harriette, who had no time to think about it, and no talent for making herself an object of compassion, never said a word; but ran about very busy and merry, exhorting, commanding, entreating the servants, and superintending a general cleaning, polishing, and embellishing the house, against Edgar came.

The bloom of hope had returned to Winny's heart, and the rose of health to her cheek; and if ever Harriette betrayed any emotion, it was one of pleasure, as she would stop in her flitting hither and thither, and catching Winny to her bosom, kiss her blushing cheek. She was so happy in Winny. One injunction she had laid on Squire Darling with the force of a command—that he should keep them advised of his progress toward home, and send a messenger a few hours in advance, so that Winny's fragile nerves might be shaken as little as possible. The squire had promised this.

At length, early one morning, as the old lady, Winny, Harriette and Hettie were sitting at breakfast together, a horseman rode up to the house, and dismounting, entered the hall, and handed a letter to Harriette. It was from Squire Darling, and ran thus:

"*Virginia Hotel, Winchester, June* 15, 18—.

"MY DEAR LITTLE SWEETHEART—

"It is dark, and we have just this moment arrived here. I, Edgar, and the whole party. I shall dispatch a fellow with this to-night to let you know that early to-morrow morning we set out for Oak Grove. We shall be with you by sunset. Have tea ready against we come. Have all the people we like there to meet us. Kiss mother, Winny,

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Hettie, and the baby. Charge them to me, and Ill pay you when I come.

"Yours, fondly and faithfully,

"JARED DARLING."

It was evening. The setting sun was bathing the whole sky and earth in a flood of crimson glory. In the supper-room at Oak Grove stood a table covered with a rich, white damask cloth, set out with an elegant service of Sevres' porcelain, and a costly set of elaborately-chased silver plate, and illuminated by a large chandelier hanging from the ceiling above it, which was already lighted.

On the piazza stood one group of persons, consisting of Father Burleigh, Claude Vellemonte, Imogene, Mrs. Summerfield, Harriette and Winny; and another group composed of Miss Mattie Smilie, Sammie and Hettie; lower down, on the steps, sat Nerve, Kill and old Gelly; while scattered about the lawn were the other domestics, all waiting, all watching the approach of a traveling carriage, attended by an outrider, and which was now very near the outer gate. Harriette, with her arm around Winny's waist, supported her against her bosom; but, as the carriage drew near the house, seeing that her charge had grown very pale, and feeling that she trembled fearfully, Harriette stooped and said:

"Winny, my love, you must not receive him here in the midst of all these people, near and dear though they are. It would be too bad. Let me take you to your own room;" and half leading, half carrying, the nearly fainting girl, Harriette left her in her chamber, and returned to the piazza in time to see Squire Darling alight from his carriage followed by Edgar Ardenne, Willie Smilie, and—really that was too wicked in him—*Colonel Dangerfield!*

"Where—where is Winny?" inquired Squire Darling, looking around and shaking hands right and left, in which

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example he was followed by the others. "Where is Winny? I don't see her."

"She is in her chamber," replied Harriette, pale, but self-possessed.

"In her chamber! so best. Edgar, my son, go seek her there—it is the same old place, and—Harry!" said he, turning, and taking Harriette by the hand, "Harry, come here!—Dangerfield!—". Colonel Dangerfield stepped up. "Here she is—take her! She is the very best, dearest child that God ever made or the sun ever shone upon—take her!" said the squire, with a red and tearful face, and a voice trembling with emotion. "Love her! She has taught me, by simple example and experience, a trite lesson, but a true lesson—that to be happy myself I must try to make others happy—blessed be God!'

THE END.

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